

TRANSCRIPT OF PODCAST

WORK WITH PURPOSE SPECIAL EDITION

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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. Well, today on Work with Purpose, we're talking APS professions. Back in 2019, the Independent Review of the public service highlighted the need for greater professionalisation of roles within the APS. And in the government's response to that review, it was agreed to stand up a professions model, which would help to build much needed capability and to support career paths. The first three professions that have been established are human resources, digital and data. And joining me in the studio today are the three heads of those professions.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Jacqui Curtis, who is the Chief Operating Officer of the ATO. She is the Head of the Human Resources Profession. Randall Brugeaud, the Chief Executive of the Digital Transformation Agency, is Head of the Digital Profession. While Australia's Chief Statistician and head of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Dr David Gruen, is the Head of the Data Profession. A very warm welcome to you all. Jacqui, the Human Resources Profession was first to be launched back in October of 2019. What was your vision for the profession at that time and how did COVID change your plans for the profession?

JACQUI CURTIS: Yeah. Thanks, David. Well, at the time, I think the vision for many of us who are senior leaders in HR was really to lift the value proposition that HR professionals were able to offer to the business and the APS enterprise more broadly, and really sort of bring to bear the expertise that we have that would enable us to ensure the APS had a workforce that was fit for purpose, highly capable, and could take us into the future to be able to deliver on government services for Australian citizens. So really supporting the government's agenda by having the right people in the right place at the right time. And I think for a long time, HR professionals have been, in some ways, able to deliver on that value proposition and offer expertise that helped to position the APS in that way. But I think it was clear from the Thodey Review that really there was a mixed capability across that profession.

JACQUI CURTIS: And whilst there were many, many people in the HR Profession, it was very varied as to how expert and how capable they were and also how they were viewed by the business. The value proposition and the service offering wasn't really spot on and fit for purpose. And I think for myself and for other HR professionals and in talking to Peter Woolcott who set up the professions, the first one, as you rightly said, that was established, what we really wanted to do was to ensure that the people giving advice around HR were really top notch and expert in their field, but also recognised for the value that they could bring to the business and to the enterprise. So our vision was capability uplift, make sure we had really good, strong career pathways that we could attract and recruit the right people into HR roles, and to reposition HR as a central player to strategy for the organisations that they're supporting going forward.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And then came COVID. You were really just getting started with your work. Did it help, did it hinder? What was the benefit of having the professions?

JACQUI CURTIS: To be honest with you, David, it couldn't have come at a better time for us. And I know that's a strange thing to say about such a terrible crisis. But our Professional Stream, as you rightly said, was established in the October, and we'd actually been able to put in place some of the initiatives that were part of the strategy. So we'd already commenced movement and momentum on those initiatives. For example, we had a network in place that had already ... the numbers had already built to about two and a half thousand people across the whole of the service, HR professionals. We knew where the capability was to some degree, so we were starting to get an idea of where the pockets of expertise were around things like industrial relations, health, and wellbeing. Even things like policy, which in the HR Profession, up until that point, we weren't really sure where the capability pockets were, we weren't really sure where you'd go to get best practice.

JACQUI CURTIS: So we had that, and when COVID struck, HR professionals were front and centre, really along with some of the other streams, which I'm sure Randall and David will elaborate on, for actually helping to enable agencies to deal with the crisis from a supporting perspective. So to be able to draw on those pockets of expertise rapidly and share information and collaborate so that the advice we were providing was the best possible advice in really very unusual circumstances. And to be able to do that with pace and consistency, and to be able to share that then across the network rapidly was exactly what was required from the profession. And the fact that we're already established actually helped us to be able to do that.

DAVID PEMBROKE: We'll come to that, I think in the future, as we look to the future from here, because it sounds like it's almost an accelerant, a positive accelerant to that structure. But Randall, you're next cab off the rank. Launched in April of last year, certainly in the eye of the storm. Tell us your story. As Peter Woolcott said, okay, it's time for digital to get started at a time where things were pretty hectic inside the APS.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: Yeah. And our experience was very similar to what Jacqui described in that there were things that we had already done, which positioned us well to be able to support the government's response to the pandemic. But as you said, the eye of the storm, the Digital Profession launched in April 2020, so we needed to commence that profession entirely digitally. We had to get to prospective members and describe a service offer. But I think the pandemic and the period that preceded that, with the natural disasters that we saw over the Christmas period, I think helped us to shape the profession. And it also helped to accelerate a lot of the work that we were already doing. So we'd done a lot of work in relation to sourcing and buying capabilities from the market.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: We had marketplaces that allowed people to get the infrastructure that they needed to work from home. The video conferencing capabilities that we're all very familiar with now, weren't particularly broadly used, where now that is a default that people are using in their everyday work. But I think we demonstrated that the collaboration, and Jacqui mentioned that, I think that is one of the key things that we've taken from the pandemic. It changed the way we work together, and the Digital Profession has got a part to play in informing that through how we work, not just the technical skills that we offer. It also, I think, sharpened our focus on that end user benefit. We had people that were desperately in need of support. We had to ensure that our digital services and systems were up to providing services that were meeting an unprecedented demand.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: And so there was some remediation that we did. And in a lot of cases, the services that we had stood up without intervention and where we needed to intervene, we did that. And the other thing I think that it really highlighted was the importance of getting information out in a coordinated way. So we did work with the platform australia.gov.au to integrate information, not just at a Commonwealth level, but States and Territories contributed to that as well. That needed really specialist digital skills, content designers, more general skills in project management and so on. But it really increased the prominence, I think, of that digital interaction point that so many people were demanding and needing during the pandemic.

DAVID PEMBROKE: So, how then has it changed your plans then? If you sit back where you were thinking ... obviously before April of last year, you would have been thinking about the Digital Profession, but how is it different now because of COVID? In terms of where you can see the potential for the professions?

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: I think one of the things that Peter Woolcott has been talking about, and this is something that happened quite naturally during the pandemic, was this unified purpose that I'd mentioned, but a greater level of sharing. And what we've seen is that that has facilitated our drive in the profession, and in fact it's across all of the professions, to share these scarce and in demand resources, so mobility. There were thousands of public servants who surged in to provide support in areas that were required. A big part of our professions is to better share the resources that we have in high demand and scarce skill sets. So I think the way we operated during the pandemic has helped to inform how we think about sharing resources across the public service. I think it's also highlighted the need for us to operate differently and to deliver increments that are highly iterative, where we work together, we engage on a regular basis.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: In the height of COVID, we were doing twice daily stand-ups with about six agencies and the equivalent number of Ministers' offices to ensure that the health response that we were providing for the pandemic was fit for purpose. And so, that I think is going to remain in how we work together, how it changes our approach to solving problems in a much more incremental and user-centred way.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Dr Gruen, we talk about digital and really the output around this is the data. And I'd be interested to hear your story of the profession as you were standing it up, the last one to get away in September. And really, probably one of the great successes of the APS last year and its supportive government was that ability to support great decision-making. And I know that there was an enormous amount of data that was being synthesised, not just public sector data, but private sector data from banks and others. Can you take us through that story and indeed your vision for the profession and how your thinking changed around the data profession as a result of what took place last year?

DAVID GRUEN: Very happy to, David. I think it might be helpful for the audience if I spend just a little bit of time talking about the difference between data and digital. It's clear to cognoscenti, but I think for lots of people, data and digital go together and it's not obvious what the difference is. There are definitely close links and it's often the case that new digital platforms generate more data and therefore provide the need for data professionals who can analyse that data. It might be worth giving one example, just to make it concrete, and it goes to part of the COVID response. One of the things that we at the ABS did in the early part of the COVID pandemic was we had been in discussions with the ATO about getting access to Single Touch Payroll data, and the crisis, the pandemic sped that up, and never waste a crisis.

DAVID GRUEN: And with the help of the ATO, we got that data in the door in early April. Now, why am I telling you this story? It was a digital innovation namely the capacity for businesses to communicate with the ATO via Single Touch Payroll that made the whole thing possible. And what did we get out of it? From the point of view of data, we got weekly feeds of the employment experience of slightly more than 10 million Australians. And as a consequence of that, the ABS is now publishing fortnightly updates of what has happened to jobs across the country. And because we have so much of it, we can cut this data by age, by industry, by region, you name it, provided we have the data. But nevertheless, that's a concrete example of the difference between a digital innovation, namely the digital internet, et cetera, that made this data possible and the data which requires a different set of skills to analyse.

DAVID GRUEN: So I think that might be helpful for people to just make concrete in their minds, what the difference is. So, as you said, the data profession was launched after the other two. And we had had quite a bit of experience of COVID by the time the Data Profession was launched. And as Jacqui said, in our case, again, it's a strange comment, the idea that COVID brought huge opportunities. But in data, it did. Because in a situation like a crisis where things are changing fast and you have very little idea what's going on, you've got anecdotes and you can ask your uncle, but there are better alternatives and running surveys is one of them. And one of the things the ABS did was to introduce small, quick surveys. And we did that as a consequence of COVID.

DAVID GRUEN: And so we were able to move from a world where we have very high quality surveys, which we continue to run, to surveys that are much smaller, order of 1,000 households or 1,000 businesses, and we can collect the data in a week and publish it a week later. And that's completely unheard of, but it means that decision makers, whether they be in government or in the community, have a much more accurate idea of what is actually going on out there that's based on something scientific rather than just who happened to ring them up and say, things are terrible in Tallarook. So I think the crisis brought to the fore just how powerful data can be for public policy. And we have seen, across the public service, a significant rise in data units being set up in different departments to make the best use of all this new data that we used not to have, but we now have.

DAVID GRUEN: And so I think it makes a lot of sense to have a profession over the top of this, which coordinates, builds capability, and thinks in a more professionalised way, how to build this for the public service.

DAVID PEMBROKE: But it's interesting, isn't it? In all three responses, you get this sense of movement, of chasing, of things moving very quickly. So to your issue around building a capability to be able to synthesise and move with this data at a time of great speed, how, in terms of the data profession, are you going to do that? How are we going to keep up?

DAVID GRUEN: Well, I think it generates interest. So I think if I can't keep up, I'll be happy. In the sense that that will be a sign ... Yeah, that will be a sign that people are pushing and being interested and wanting to do more and there is a great deal of interest. And there are various elements of it, which I think we're going to talk about in this podcast, so I won't go into the various elements because I think they are common across our profession. But in terms of data, there is something unusual about where we are in time, which is that there has been an explosion in available data. Some of it public sector, like Single Touch Payroll, but lots of it private sector. And one of the things we're doing is, and you mentioned it at the beginning, bank transactions data, for instance.

DAVID GRUEN: Another example is supermarket scanner data. Rather than going into supermarkets and actually asking people, asking supermarkets what the prices are for things, we at the ABS now get access to every transaction that is scanned through a scanner in the top for supermarket chains. So there is a quantum change in the quantity of data and its potential usefulness. And so if I can't keep up, lots of people are going to help me.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Randall, yeah?

DAVID GRUEN: Yeah.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: And just adding to that, I think this demand is something that we're seeing globally. We are needing to move as quickly as we possibly can to respond to demands. Deloitte Access Economics and RMIT released a report in February of this year. And they found that one in four jobs up until 2025 all require strong data and digital skills. And when you look at the total number of jobs, that's 160,000 short we're going to be, unless we do something. So these professions will help to contribute to our national response. And as I said, global phenomenon, the World Economic Forum released a report in January as well. They are saying that nine in 10 jobs in the next 10 years will required digital and data skills. And that's getting upwards of two million roles overall. So what we're doing is not only contributing to the capability of the APS, but contributing to the capability of the nation.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Yeah. Jacqui.

JACQUI CURTIS: Well, and to go to your question about, are we going to be able to keep up with demand, how we feel about that. I think I could say for all of the professional streams, we've known for some time that we are going to need data professionals and digital professionals and expertise. We've known that in order to be able to deliver on the commitments and the expectations of the community, we would need people that could really rally and deliver, but we haven't really had the environment to enable us to do that. So we've been looking at this thinking, oh, we'd like to move in this direction, but there's been lots and lots of resistance, I suppose. And what COVID's done is it's created the momentum and the opportunity.

JACQUI CURTIS: I think the biggest challenge for us is going to be maintaining that momentum and actually harnessing the opportunities that are available to us. There's a risk that we have stretched the elastic band and we spring right back to where we were. And that's why the establishment of the professions is so important because you've got that leadership, but we've also got the remit and the imprimatur coming from the top to say, we're behind this. And I think that's what's really important.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And so, with that perspective, where to from here? And this is a question for all three of you, in terms of the professions. Our audience is largely in the public service, and I think there's a great interest about the profession. So what can you tell them about what's coming?

DAVID GRUEN: Who do you want to start with?

DAVID PEMBROKE: Oh, we'll start with you, David. Why not? Why not?

DAVID GRUEN: Okay. I mean, we've come to this more recently than the other two professions, so I think we're certainly running hard to try and get things in place. So one thing we're doing is capability uplift. We're talking to ANU about putting together a course. And the other thing that I'm very conscious of when it comes to the Data Profession is the fact that there are both data professionals, but there are also often more senior people who will never be data professionals in their own right. But need to have a higher level of data literacy than they currently have, because they are going to be exposed to data related issues and they're going to need to be able to make assessments of that.

DAVID GRUEN: So one of the things I'm keenly conscious of is the importance of not only building skills amongst people for whom data is a very large part of their career, but also for those people who I think will need a general uplift in data capability. And so the first course that we're designing with the ANU is designed with that in mind for say SES Band 1, EL2 level, people who are going to be exposed to a lot more of data and have heard the terms, but don't really know what they mean in any detail. So that's one element of capability uplift. Another element is the network, and we've all set up networks. So, opportunities for people to share.

DAVID GRUEN: A third thing that I'm very keen on, there are a lot of organisations around the APS that use data intensively in one way or another, but there is not a lot of movement between these organisations. And what we are doing is setting up immersion experiences where people from one data intensive area of the public service would go and work in another one for a few months and learn. So the ABS is setting this up with the Bureau of Meteorology. But the more we look, it doesn't have to go through us. The whole idea of the professions is co-design, and so we're extremely comfortable with other individual departments doing these immersion things on their own. So that's another stream. Let me leave it there and let the others join in, and we can come back to the other parts of it.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Yeah, okay. Jacqui.

JACQUI CURTIS: There's lots of commonality across the streams. The strategies were put in place, capability uplift is one of them, and David's talked about partnerships with universities. The expectation now of the community and our workforce in particular is that they can access quick, easy modules. Micro-credentials is the terminology that's being used, so they can build up qualifications, or they can build credentials that are recognised to help them move in their workplace or shift careers. So I think there is a lot of commonality in the HR Professional Stream. One of the things that we've been trying to do, and it's pretty effective at the moment, we've had some shift in this space, is start to build our capability from the bottom, by a graduate entry level program. We never had a specific program for graduates. Before graduates came in, they were generalists in the organisation.

JACQUI CURTIS: So we've got 39 graduates starting in the HR professions here, and that's up from 26 last year. So that's a terrific improvement. And those people will start to build capability from bottom up. We presented recently to the Secretaries Board and we had a very clear message, don't just think about graduates, think about school leavers, think about people retraining. So our capability uplift needs to be broad and not just focused on high level qualifications or people coming up through the graduate stream. The other thing that we're doing in the HR space is we are linking with a professional association, which is AHRI, which is our professional association. Unlike some established professions, we've never had a culture of having to keep up your professional development throughout your career in order to retain that accreditation and credential.

JACQUI CURTIS: So we are now working with them just to position us on a sustainable footing with professions such as the legal profession or the finance profession, where they have the chartered accountants and legal profession. It's second nature for them to keep up today with what's happening in their profession through credentials. So that's another stream of work we're doing. But there's a lot of commonality and I'm sure Randall can add to what I've just said.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: Yes. And I would reinforce the point. We have more in common in the professions than we have different. Clearly, we've got skills, which differ between the professions-

DAVID PEMBROKE: So just to that point, are the three of you then working quite closely together in terms of the development of the professions?

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: Very closely.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Okay.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: So as Jacqui mentioned, jointly presented to the Secretaries Board to provide them a view as to what our strategies are. And we have fundamentally a need to understand what we currently have, what we need and how we bridge the gap between the two. And that's going to be informed by domain specific skills that we may need to focus on. But we've done a lot of research with individuals and agencies to understand what they want and need from the profession. And individuals want their skills to be understood and recognised. Agencies want to know what they have and provide support to get them to where they need to be. And as we work through this, emerging talent programs or entry-level programs, we're all working on variations of that with a common theme of pulling back earlier to get younger people interested and passionate about both a career in public service, but also a career in a particular profession.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: And David's point is an incredibly important one. There is a base level of understanding we need to provide to people who may not be part of the professions. And so this is where this cross-pollination is also important. We worked with the APSC to develop a program called Leading in the Digital Age. We've done training for about 10% of all of the senior executive and teaching them about, what is service design? What does agile mean? Which is a much misused term. We've produced a Little Book of Digital, which I'm happy to share, which basically describes the 101. These are things that we all need to do. We also are working together on specific capabilities, career pathways. So as we look at accreditation and we understand the skills that people have, while Jacqui is working on the HR specific framework, we're working against SFIA, Skills for the Information Age.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: And that is then being used to provide a tool to allow individuals to see what their potential career pathways are. I'm a tester, and I would like to get into accessibility. What skills do you need to shift? And this is something that we can share just as membership platforms and so on. So I think there is an incredible amount that we share, and being able to divide up the work with a strategic plan in place allows us to accelerate our impact.

DAVID PEMBROKE: So a question, again, to all three of you, and perhaps David, I'll start with you, around barriers and challenges. What are those common barriers that each of you have at the moment? Because it sounds like there's good strategic plans, structures in place. But where are the difficulties that you're finding you're bumping up against at the moment? And what can people in the APS do to perhaps smooth the road to this integrated professional capability building approach that the professions are there to design to do?

DAVID GRUEN: So, let me approach it this way. I think that what we're aiming to do is to ... I mean, this is an important initiative for the three professions to build the super structure that will enable people to have careers that are predominantly in each of these areas, through their public service careers. But there is an important sense in which we want to mainstream this stuff. We want it to become part of the furniture, that people will come into the public service, be able to move around in each of these professions. Some will presumably leave the profession and go on and do other things. I mean, it's not going to be exclusive like that. So I guess my sense of it is, we've got some time to do this, a couple of years to make progress on these things, but we need to mainstream it. We need to make it part of the furniture of the APS.

DAVID GRUEN: So I wouldn't call that a barrier, but I would call it a challenge. What we all hope is that if you looked back in five years' time, these professional streams would be well-established in the APS, they would be taken as just the way it ought to be. And people would be recognised for their expertise in these areas and would be able to progress, and it's part of the furniture. So I think that's important.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Yeah. Jacqui.

JACQUI CURTIS: It is. I think when we established the HR stream, I think Peter Woolcott had a vision to establish that first, because a lot of what we're talking about around the strategies is people and workforce and workforce planning and things that we can then assist with the professional streams and provide support. But what was really interesting in my stream, which really shocked me, was when we went to get information about, who are the people who are the senior people in the HR Profession? What skills and capabilities do they have? What credentials do they have? We couldn't put our hands on it readily. And what has actually become apparent through our work and working together is there are other streams that can actually help us to bring that picture together. Not just for the HR Profession, but if we can get a view of the HR Profession, who the people are, where they sit, what credentials they've had, bring it through data and with the digital interface, that's going to be something that can then be more broadly used across the whole of the APS.

JACQUI CURTIS: And this is what David's saying. Even though we're doing some things specifically in our streams, a lot of what we're learning is there's applicability to what we're doing, which will actually uplift capability, uplift performance, improve the information we have at our fingertips to deliver on a really top class workforce, which is on the agenda for the APSC and the government going forward. So that's why I think Randall's going to develop me a nice little easy app and something that we can do digitally to find out where are our top people and what skills have they got.

DAVID GRUEN: He is now.

JACQUI CURTIS: So that's going to be great. Well, don't worry, we've got plans for you as well.

DAVID PEMBROKE: But it's cultural, isn't it, Randall? This is the thing, isn't it? You are describing a cultural change, a different way of working. And is the APS ready for that? Or is it, as Jacqui said before, is it the elastic band where, it's passed now, we can go back to the way we've always done it before? What's going to happen?

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: I think it does relate to culture, the way we think and the way we operate. But ultimately, I think the proof in the value is going to be members participate and agencies take notice because they get something good from it. That it actually helps us solve the big problems that we collectively need to face in public service. And we have the biggest problems in the country when it comes to having been through the pandemic as we support the government to get people into jobs, to restart business, to open borders. We have a part to play in contributing to that and better understanding the skills and resources that we have more effectively. Sharing those, building an understanding of what the professions have to offer, I think will all drive that value and that what we will see is people will come to us and they will want to be part of it.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: And it will be more, as David said, part of the furniture, where just as you would be cautious, or you might not be, I am, to go and see a doctor that has no qualifications, or invite an electrician into your house to rewire where you don't know their qualifications. So this comes to a point where we have the right number of people with the right skills, we know who they are and what they can do, we help them develop into what they want to be and we share more effectively. And so I think the culture does need to shift to a much more of an integrated sharing culture. And I have been a practitioner in digital roles and been in the situation where I have a scarce skill set that people like clinging to very dearly, when really what we want people to do is to release them and share them if there is a higher priority activity occurring elsewhere.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: So, that is a significant cultural shift and relinquishing some control as well as a shift that we're going to need to see as we bake some of these processes in, and that we're all working to embed digital data and HR professionals in senior recruitment. Now, that requires panels to accept the professions' advice and relinquish some control, but the outcomes we think will be much greater than the things that are given away.

DAVID PEMBROKE: So, David, how do the professions get credit if this happens? If good things happen, how do the professions be able to own some of these better performance, better outcomes? How do you think about that?

DAVID GRUEN: I guess we're going to contribute to them. I mean, it'll be up to others to decide how much credit we get, but if you think about it ... let me just try and put a lens over this. Human resources are the most important asset that the public service has, so professionalising human resources is extraordinarily important. To do the best job you can to get people in the right places and to deal with your workforce more professionally seems a very important thing to do. If you look at data and digital, they are both growth industries for the public sector. And the reason they are growth industries is because if you look on the data, on the digital side, service delivery can be made so much better by digitising all sorts of things. I mean, we've all seen the movement to apps, to the way you interact with the private sector. And increasingly with government, the public is hungry for well-designed digital interfaces with government. So digital is very much a growth industry.

DAVID GRUEN: Data is a growth industry, partly because of all the advances in digital and the fact that you can now learn, in much more granular detail, the effects of policies, what parts of the community ... where there are gaps. And I think there's no question the government has recognised the power of data and the importance of investment in data as an uplift. So I think there's a compelling logic to these three professions. Two of them because of technological advance, and the third because the public service is a large professional organisation with people at its core.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Mm-hmm. And Jacqui, as the Head of HR, this point around people, it's not just people as deliverers of outputs as such, it's people as people.

JACQUI CURTIS: Yeah.

DAVID PEMBROKE: What is the profession going to do in that side of things in terms of looking after people?

JACQUI CURTIS: Yeah. I mean, that's a great opportunity for me to share a story about COVID and our response as a profession. One of the things that obviously was front and centre of our thinking was wellbeing and health and safety of our people. And that was the same across the whole of the service, and mental health in particular. We had no idea what the impacts on people's wellbeing from a mental health perspective would be. And so, because we already had an idea of where capability was, and we understood the expertise that was required to be able to provide advice on mental health, we as a profession were able to set up a hotline for senior leaders and HR professionals themselves to call and get advice, expert advice, that they could then use to then share with their managers and with their people about how to look after people during this period around mental health.

JACQUI CURTIS: So that's just a really practical example of how the HR Profession has been able to support the response. And as we go forward, I think what we will see is far more acceptance that we can turn to the HR Profession and get credible evidence-based advice that can then be used effectively across the service to solve some of what have been really deep and ongoing problems for the service for a long time. So things like performance management, for example. I think we'll start to see shifts there as people draw on these pools of expertise, because they will have confidence in the profession, and that's going to be really important.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Okay. So one of the features of this podcast are questions from IPAA's future leaders, and today they come from Deanne Allan from the Attorney-General's Department. And Randall, I might throw this one to you. What opportunities are available to members of these professional streams? Is it networking or are there training and qualification opportunities? I think Jacqui did answer some of that earlier. But perhaps describe some of the experience of being a member of the digital stream.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: So we've touched on a few of the items that will offer value to people. One, skills accreditation. We will very soon release an enhanced membership offering that will allow people to assess their skills against our standard framework. We have a mobility pilot that we're about to commence, where we're looking for agencies and individuals to volunteer for very short-term mobility stints. And what we discovered during the pandemic was that it was important for us to be able to move quickly. Where as secondment may take a month to negotiate, we often have needed to move people to work in an organisation for a couple of hours. And so, being involved in mobility pilots, and in addition to that, the training that you'd mentioned. We've worked with both people within the public sector, but also private sector to make training opportunities available to people.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: And then there are a range of networking opportunities that we provide through communities of practice. We have many hundreds of members in some of our communities, life event communities being a very big one. And the very simple way of describing that is, it is a group of people who engage deeply with the end users of the services that we provide and construct a view of what their life event looks like regardless of the agency or service that they're interacting with. Having a baby, looking for work, transitioning to retirement. We did some excellent work with the National Bushfire Recovery Agency to help map the experience of people that experienced the bush fires.

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: So there are a range of offerings that we have. And a particular issue that we have both in data and digital is gender balance. We have about a third of our digital workforce is female compared to about half in broader industries. And so we have a range of gender-based programs as well, coaching for women. Women in IT executive mentoring programs that help to write the balance. So a range of things, and... Happy to explore that further with individuals.

JACQUI CURTIS: We have the opposite problem in Asia. We have a workforce that is dominated by women, so we have a completely different approach. But the other thing that I think that people will benefit from, we've talked a lot about capability uplift and professionalisation and training. But of course we've got, across all the professions, really expert people, top notch people who don't actually necessarily need more credentials or qualifications. So one of the things that we're also trying to do across the streams is showcase the talent we've got by way of live case studies, for example, or allowing people to showcase what they've done in an agency. It helps share best practice, but it also allows people to get some recognition for the skills and professional expertise that they bring. So that's another thing that is an advantage of being with this professional streams approach.

DAVID PEMBROKE: David, a second question from Deanne, and she asks, "I understand that each profession has an SES level head, but is there an opportunity for an APS, EL future leader to contribute to the arrangements for these professions, even if it's just in a voluntary capacity?"

DAVID GRUEN: So, I think the answer to that is, we're very keen to have people who are enthusiastic about our professions contributing. I'm talking specifically about the data. The next things I'm going to say are specifically about the data profession, but I think very similar arrangements apply. So in our case, we're represented by slightly more than 20 public service agencies through senior reference and working groups. So the senior reference groups are SES, but the working groups are people at EL levels in many cases are contributing to that work. If the agency you work for is part of these networks, then it'll be straightforward for you to get involved if you're keen. If they're not, I think the answer is, you get in touch with the relevant head or our working group people, and we'll find a way to use your skills. I mean, we're very much interested in young people who are keen on our professions contributing to the development of these things. So don't hang back, get in touch, and we'll definitely be interested in using your skills.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Just as we wrap up, one of the features of this podcasts that I really enjoy is really understanding a little bit about the people, which is you as people. Because I think it's somewhat amusing that you are heads of professions, but that's not your day job. You've got a day job on top of being head of the professions. You look after large amounts of people, responsibility for large amounts of people, you've just been through a tremendously difficult year. How are you all holding up? Randall, I'll start with you, but I'm interested to know, how are you?

RANDALL BRUGEAUD: As Jacqui said, the pandemic was an incredibly difficult time, but it really allowed us to stretch our legs. And so, while the work was intense, the impact that we were able to have in such a short time was just incredible. And so I think that's energising. I think also, as Jacqui said, the maintaining the momentum and the challenging the status quo in the longer term to have it such that we have a sustainable, enduring set of capabilities will be important. But I love what I do, I'm energised by it, and I think it's been a challenging but incredibly rewarding year.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And what about for you, Jacqui? Was it-

JACQUI CURTIS: For me, it's been refreshing not to be a collector of money and somebody who's been actually able to position ourselves as helping the community by providing some of that stimulus. But as far as the profession is concerned, look, I am super enthusiastic and excited. And I think what really brings it home to me and you, the question was from a younger up and coming person in the APS. On a daily basis, I see evidence of the movement and the success we're beginning to have across all of the professions. And what I think is really rewarding is just to get that sense of people actually want to be part of these professions. They are excited about the fact that we've actually got the name, the HR Profession or the digital profession. Earlier I said I think there is definite appetite for this stuff. I can see that every day with emails and notes that I get or little comments that come through on LinkedIn. That's what keeps me going. Yeah. And my dog.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And David, finally for you. What-

DAVID GRUEN: I don't have a dog. But apart from that, I think the professions in each of our cases are an extension of our day jobs. I mean, it is true they're an APS-wide version of our jobs. That's a shorthand way of saying it. But in each case, the professions that we are the heads of, the things we do as our day jobs, we're managers, but we're also organising things in our area. We all believe in what we do and to the extent that we can use that to proselytise across the APS. The value of the things we do, I think it's energising as the other two have said too.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Excellent. Well David, Jacqui, and Randall, thank you for your service and good luck with the professions. It sounds like there is a real energy about this, and there's an opportunity really for people to come to the professions and really give of themselves and learn and grow. I think you'd agree with me that the APS has had a pretty good 2020, and there is a such a big opportunity now and enthusiasm about public service. So thanks for your contribution and thanks for coming into the program today. And thanks also to IPAA and the team here at IPAA and to the Australian Public Service Commission for their ongoing support. This program would not happen without that support. And I'm very grateful to them. And also, the team back at Contentgroup, who also helped make it all come together. And thanks to you, the audience, for coming back in such strong numbers. It's fantastic to know that there's a big audience for content about the Australian Public Service. But that's it for now, we'll be back at the same time in two weeks. But for the moment, it's bye for now.

SPEAKER 5: Work with Purpose is a production of contentgroup, in partnership with the Institute of Public Administration Australia, and with the support of the Australian Public Service Commission.