

Opening remarks

Australian Public Service Commissioner, Peter Woolcott AO

Thank you Chair. And thank you Committee members for your time today.

I have a brief opening statement and an updated organisational chart to table, should the Committee agree.

I have a new look Executive team with me at the table.

My Deputy Commissioner, Ms Mary Wiley-Smith, has taken on a role with the Industry portfolio and Mr Patrick Hetherington is now acting Deputy Commissioner.

Ms Rina Bruinsma has joined us as First Assistant Commissioner and has been in that role for just a week. As you know, Ms Bruinsma was most recently in the Bushfire Recovery Agency and, in order to best assist the Committee, appeared with them earlier today as a witness. She will join the Commission for the next estimates hearing.

Since our last appearance, Mr Grant Lovelock has also been confirmed in the First Assistant Commissioner role and Head of the APS Academy.

Building capability and fostering continuous learning is a key focus of the Commission. Since we last met, the APS Academy has been announced and will commence its operations from 1 July 2021.

The move to the Academy presents an opportunity to reinvigorate how the APS invests in its greatest asset, its people. Building capability will never be considered 'complete' or a 'job done' – it needs to be a continuous investment. Learning approaches change and we must keep pace with best practice.

Transitioning to these new arrangements is a significant undertaking. The courses delivered through the Centre of Leadership and Learning have continued while we have been developing the new arrangements for the Academy.

It is critical that training did not stop while we moved to the Academy arrangements. I thank the Centre for continuing to deliver training and development to APS staff during this period. To support the delivery and Academy design, while also maintaining the Centre and delivering our existing workload, we drew additional resources from a variety of sources, including secondments from numerous agencies, reprioritising existing resources within the APSC and the use of short-term contractors where technical expertise could not readily be sourced elsewhere.

This Committee has been interested in the use of contractors, particularly in senior APS positions, at past hearings. This brought to our attention a potential gap in the data the Commission held and the guidance and support we provided to the APS.

In order to fill that gap, the Commission has published guidance for APS agency heads to consider when deciding to use a contractor to fill an SES-equivalent role. The guidance sets out a range of principles to consider operational requirements and ensuring appropriate governance arrangements are in place. This also flags we will now be collecting data on these matters to determine what other support the Commission can provide the APS in this area. I have a copy of this guidance to provide the Committee, should you agree.

Finally, the Commission has been working on an APS exhibition to be permanently housed in the Museum of Modern Democracy at Old Parliament House. The first phase of this exhibition is being launched this week. This will focus on how the APS has supported the Government of the day to deliver for the Australian people, highlighting significant events in our history, over successive governments. I would like to thank the Museum Director, Ms Daryl Karp AM, for her support and guidance in delivering this first phase. I also extend an invite to the Committee to look at the exhibition once it opens on Thursday.

There are a number of senior officers from the Commission here today to expand on these matters.

**APSC Top Structure
Organisational Chart**
21 May 2021

