

2012 Valedictory Series Foreword

The Valedictory Series, first published in November 2006,¹ affords the public service the opportunity to honour some of our most distinguished leaders, retiring Secretaries and agency heads.

Like previous publications this edition contains words of wisdom from a diverse group of people with a range of different styles. Without doubt all sixteen papers provide a thought-provoking experience for the reader and an insight into the views of some highly effective leaders and communicators about public service craft – leadership stories, career reflections and their ideas for the future.

This publication, prepared in partnership with ANZSOG, compiles edited versions of the Valedictory Lectures delivered as part of this series, complemented by essays from other former colleagues.

As Andrew Podger noted in his essay:

...the APS has a history of which we should all be proud, and that pride should be fostered as an important means of reinforcing confidence in our role and capability today.

Roger Beale, in his essay, mentions that while analytical and emotional intelligence, together with education and drive are all of importance, a certain degree of toughness and moral independence is part of every successful secretary's personality.

Ric Smith emphasises the value of collaboration, a theme woven throughout *Ahead of the Game: Blueprint for Reform of Australian Government Administration*:

The best times have had this in common: they have been those occasions in which public servants from many different agencies have come together to work as one team to deliver a clear result. Ironically, I saw this at its best in the aftermath of the Bali bombing...

Leadership is, not surprisingly, a difficult business. Often there are no right answers and a leader cannot be the font of all knowledge – although some are remarkably well-gifted in this sphere.

Perhaps, fundamentally, and most importantly for the success of the Service, a Secretary's commitment to upholding the APS Values and Code of Conduct is

¹ Most of these lectures were published at the time as commemorative pamphlets and placed on the APSC's website (under the 'Forum Speeches' link).

With the benefit of hindsight

a mirror of their ability. After all as past Public Service Commissioner, Lynelle Briggs, observed in her lecture, Secretaries are the leaders of the APS and their behaviour is watched and modelled:

Studies have shown that people will do what they see a leader do; even when that leader tells them behaving that way is unacceptable.

I trust that my foreword will whet your appetite to delve into the words of some thoughtful and committed former public servants.

I have been fortunate to work alongside almost all of them over the years and, to varying degrees, enjoyed a shared, and sometimes fraught, commitment to serving the public.

Steve Sedgwick

Public Service Commissioner