



Institute for Public Administration Australia

9:20 am, 27 May 2014

Hilton Adelaide, Ballroom

Hon Jay Weatherill MP

Premier of South Australia

[CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY]

I want thank Erma Ranieri as the President of the Institute of Public Administration Australia here in South Australia, and members of the IPAA SA divisional council for their invitation to continue as Patron.

We acknowledge that we gather today on the traditional land of the Kaurna people, and we respect their spiritual relationship with their country.

A generation of politicians lined up to gleefully announce that the era of big government was over.

Today, I am here to tell you that, in South Australia the era of quality, modern government services has arrived.

Abdication of responsibility and cuts to services has been hidden behind a rhetorical veil of greater public choice for too long.

Government is an expression of common good but we in the public sector have the responsibility to maximise the potential of each taxpayer dollar spent.

Quality public transport, education and health are reliant on the public servants, the nurses and doctors who work in the public service.

We are kept safe by police officers and firefighters, who are public servants.

There is more than 100,000 people work in public service jobs. It is the largest workforce in South Australia.

They help build a strong community and a prosperous one.

Public servants help keep South Australia's mining and energy sectors growing.

They keep our streets orderly and safe, and run the transport networks that help us get around.

There is no part of South Australia's history, social, economic or cultural, without the involvement of the public sector.

They look after the most vulnerable people in our community and maintain the parks and trails where we spend our leisure time.

And they help imagine and execute important government initiatives, such as *Our Jobs Plan*.

When it was announced that Holden would cease operating in South Australia from 2017, an immediate response was required.

Around 13,000 South Australians rely directly or indirectly on that industry for employment. Government clearly has a role to play in trying to secure future opportunities for those workers.

Our Jobs Plan was designed and calibrated to help shape industry development and continue to support growth

Part of this plan is already well underway. A 90-day change project has been established to create a one stop shop for Holden employees in the northern region.

This approach will be extended to ensure that affected employees in the southern and western regions are also provided with much needed support.

Advocates of a small government approach would not have been able to even imagine that there was a role for government or be able to respond with the urgency and proportion necessary to help these South Australians at a critical juncture in their lives.

We need an open, modern public service known for excellence.

We spend too much time talking about the size of the sector rather than the quality of its people and their work.

But the search for excellence never ends.

Our Labor Government believes that government should be open, nimble, and efficient – a vestige of excellence that exists to serve the community.

In the months leading up to the election, we released 14 key policy statements themselves crafted and supported by the public service, culminating in a policy called *A Modern Public Service*.

This policy recognised that our public servants are an asset whose value must be realised - not a burden to be minimised.

But it also reflected our belief that there is much more we can do to use the expertise and professionalism of those working in the public service.

The Modern Public Service policy is a culmination of reform programs that have been underway since 2002 with many new and expanded initiatives.

We introduced collective performance pay for Chief Executives, where Chief Executives of government departments will be required to demonstrate how they have worked collaboratively to deliver services and improve productivity.

Probably the most used phrase in government is 'across government' but is the least implemented, that is because it's hard. The Westminster System of Government has accountability running up and down silos – not across.

Collective performance pay for Chief Executives will help address this.

As part of the policy we announced 200 administrative trainee places on offer to 17-24 year olds across South Australia.

Jobs4YouthSA is targeted at young people without VET or tertiary qualifications who can apply for roles across metropolitan and country areas.

These young people are already reinvigorating and help to shape a modern public sector.

I was pleased to meet a few of them last week during one of the visits to public sector officers I have been undertaking to discuss the 'Simplify' initiative.

So don't be surprised to see me pop up in an office near you soon.

Simplify is a fantastic new initiative where we ask people right across government at all levels how we can simplify the way we operate. Through Simplify we also gave the community an opportunity to suggest ways to make government services more responsive to their needs.

South Australians were asked to submit their ideas with top 100 ideas to be published and implemented. We're working through the ideas now.

Engaging with as many people as possible will help us continue to build a public service focussed on providing all South Australians with high quality services, provided efficiently.

We announced that a Charter of Public Service Guarantee will be developed to ensure every customer knows the treatment and service they can expect to receive from government agencies.

People accept that things go wrong, but they want to know that we'll recover problems quickly and acknowledge that something had gone wrong. What they don't want to be told is that their experience wasn't considered important.

The policy also included a further round of 90-day projects that aim to find solutions to complex community problems within three months.

The truth is if you haven't come up with a solution after 90 days, you're probably stuck.

The 90-day projects have provided an opportunity to develop a more flexible, direct approach within government.

Some have been immediately successful, whilst other projects have not achieved their intended outcomes. But no idea has fallen into a state of inertia.

We want the concept of the 90 day projects to inform how we do business over the long term. The public sector needs to use these projects to drive cultural change in agencies.

Over the course of the next year, key agencies will develop their own change programs. Some agencies are already doing this.

The government wants to see agencies learning from their experience working through Change@SA and applying those lessons to create sustainable cultural change. Something that becomes self-generating.

The culture of the public sector ultimately rests in the hands of every member of the public service not just in the hands of chief executives - where each individual takes the responsibility to be leaders in their own sphere.

If we are to transform the way that government is considered in South Australia we depend on change that springs from within. We can't rely on consultants to come in and tell us what to do.

As part of its election promises, the Government has created the Office for the Public Sector.

The new office will be headed by Erma Ranieri as Chief Executive. Erma has already demonstrated her ability to achieve reform through Change@SouthAustralia and the Office for Public Sector Renewal.

By taking on leadership of the new Office for the Public Sector, she will ensure proper integration of all its functions including:

- Leadership development
- Workforce planning
- Cultural change
- Partnership building across sectors
- Industrial relations
- Workforce wellbeing
- The South Australian Executive Service

The aim of the office is to create a fully integrated approach to building the kind of public sector culture we all want to see.

We want public sector chief executives to assume collective responsibility for the performance of the sector - rather than focussing on their own organisations.

That's why we've introduced collective performance agreements for Senior Management Council. These agreements cover the High Performance Framework, implementation of the public sector values and involvement in the 90-day change projects.

We all have a stake in this.

We all have the responsibility to achieve a more collegiate approach to the work of government.

We all need to work to ensure that we are guided by, and responsible for, our public sector values.

Those values are an expression of who we are as public servants. They are founded on strong traditions of service and professionalism.

We must renew our commitment to these values.

I have asked the new Office for the Public Sector to integrate the values with the Code of Ethics to provide a single reference point for direction on professional conduct and performance.

We believe that South Australia is stronger when government, business and the community work together.

Partnerships and collaborations will be central to the work of the public sector in the future.

More than ever before, a productive and growing economy relies and the level of innovation that only comes from deep collaboration across sector lines.

The current debate about the size of government is informed by the perception that, by nature, government lacks the capacity to innovate and create.

It's just simply wrong.

The internet, computers, laser satellites were all products of innovation that occurred within governments, particularly in the United States.

The private sector has traditionally benefitted from such innovations.

I believe that this is central to the role of government – to create opportunities for business, for the benefit of the community.

Our government has a number of initiatives in place to build greater collaboration with the business and community sectors. Through Change@SouthAustralia, agencies have been partnering with other sectors on 90-day change projects.

They have addressed a range of issues, such as:

- the transition for automotive workers,
- identifying opportunities for industry growth,
- improving social wellbeing for young people in communities,
- managing better partnerships in building affordable housing; and,
- getting more services to businesses online.

There is obviously an enormous amount of work to meet growing demand for services at a time of shrinking resources.

More than partnering with business, we are also actively looking for ways that we can reduce any unnecessary red tape.

Some red tape – and green tape – is necessary. It ensures that certain standards are met in the public interest.

But some regulatory initiatives remain beyond their used by date.

We must remain vigilant to minimise the potentially adverse impact on our businesses of regulation that no longer adds security.

Simplify is the Government's flagship red tape reduction program. Through it, public servants and the community have identified over 700 potential red tape reduction initiatives.

We have also funded a red tape reduction program through DMITRE.

For better or for worse, people are time poor these days.

Every time a South Australian receives impeccable service from a government agency, their perception of government changes.

Every time a South Australian who relies on government services is walks away satisfied, their faith in the public sector and their faith in government as an instrument of good is renewed.

I want acknowledge the important role that IPAA can play in the life of public servants.

Strong public service is a vital feature of this state and public servants should feel proud of their profession.

Our public servants deserve a professional association that is willing to raise complex and, at times, controversial issues to challenge conventional ways of doing business.

You have the ear of our Labor Government.

We want to work with you to improve the standing of the public sector in South Australia.

Since our election victory, I have been visiting public sector offices across the city. I will continue to visit your workplaces throughout this term in government.

I have had discussions about the obvious impact that the Federal Budget is going to have

Our Labor Government wants to modernise the public sector, make it more efficient and encourage an inspiring culture of change and growth in it.

We see it as an asset to be realised not a burden to be minimised.

And we need the Institute of Public Administration Australia to help us realise this grand vision for government.

Thank you.