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TRANSCRIPT OF PODCAST

Work with Purpose

A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE #6

WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT BULLYING AND
HARASSMENT

Hosted by Clare Walsh, Deputy Secretary, Business Enabling Services,
Department of Finance and Councillor, IPAA ACT

TRANSCRIPT

David Pembroke:

Hello everyone and welcome to Work with Purpose, a podcast about the Australian Public Service. My name's David Pembroke, thanks for joining me. Today we have an important episode of our National Perspective series, where we'll be looking at today the issue of bullying and harassment. The host of today's podcast is Clare Walsh, the Deputy Secretary of Business Enabling Services at the Department of Finance and a counsellor of IPAA ACT.

Clare Walsh:

Hello everybody and welcome to a special episode of Work with Purpose, a National Perspective. My name is Clare Walsh and I am the Deputy Secretary of Enabling Services at the Department of Finance and an IPAA ACT counsellor. And it's a great honour to be your host today for this episode. I begin today's podcast by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting today, the Ngunnawal people and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the ongoing contribution they make to the life of our city and this region. I'd also like to acknowledge the custodians of all the lands from where anybody listening to this podcast or my guests on the podcast are also joining us from. Now, today's conversation is a really very important one. It's an important one for us to be having at a societal level.

Clare Walsh:

It's a really important one to be having as public servants. And I think it's fair to say and I think we would all agree that the vast majority of public servants behave respectfully and civilly to their colleagues, but employee surveys of public servants across the country repeatedly show that bullying and harassment is still a significant issue. There is strong evidence that it weakens institutions, undermines productivity and innovation and poisons workplace culture. So today we're going to talk about what it is and what can be done to tackle it and the role we can all play in making sure that we have safe and respectful workplaces in the public sector. But let me first welcome today's guest speakers. We have Renee Leon PSM, Vice Chancellor and President at Charles Sturt University in Bathurst.

Clare Walsh:

Renee will be no stranger to many people listening to this podcast as she has extensive experience in Commonwealth and state public sector administration covering policy, program management and service delivery. She has been the secretary of two Commonwealth departments, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Employment and has served as the CEO of the ACT Department of Justice and Community Safety. Welcome Renee. Our second guest is Adam Fennessy PSM. Adam is the Victorian Public Sector Commissioner and has over 20 years of public sector experience at state and federal levels, including four years as secretary of the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and prior to that, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries. He has also worked in the private sector as a partner with advisory firm Ernst & Young and served on several boards. So welcome Adam.

Clare Walsh:

And finally, we're joined by Dr Gordon de Brouwer PSM. Gordon, again, will be known to many of you. He is the IPAA National President and a professor of economics jointly appointed at the ANU Crawford School of Public Policy and the College of Business and Economics. Gordon has 35 years experience in public policy and administration in Australia, including as secretary of the Department of the Environment and Energy and senior roles in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Treasury, ANU and the Reserve Bank of

Australia. Now Gordon also authored the paper, *Bullying and Harassment in the Public Sector in Australia: Practical Ways to Lift Respect in Public Service Workplaces*, which was first published in the conversation last November and is really the premise of today's conversation. So welcome Gordon.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer:

Thank you very much, Clare.

Clare Walsh:

So as I said, this is a really important conversation for us to be having and obviously a very topical one. I wonder, Gordon, if we can start with you given it was your paper that we really are using as the basis of our conversation today. And in your paper, you refer to the fact that almost every public service across the nation has a well known bully in its midst. So why do you think bullying and harassment has been allowed to continue like this and why have efforts to address it not been successful?

Dr Gordon de Brouwer:

Yeah. Thank you very much, Clare. I think every jurisdiction takes bullying and harassment in all its forms. So it can be everything from yelling or ignoring someone to not giving them particular work or treating them differently. Every jurisdiction takes it seriously, but every jurisdiction could also do a lot more. And I think people do find that when they try, they have to do it systematically and they have to do it consistently across the whole organisation, including at the very top because leadership matters. And I think there's been a reluctance to do that because it requires admitting that there's a problem in our systems. And it's a bit like showing your dirty laundry to people, but also there's probably at times an ethos that you just got to do the job and get on with it and behaviour doesn't matter because that's secondary to delivery.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer:

And I think the point around bullying and harassment is that you can certainly deliver, most people can deliver, but you end up destroying an institution if you have got systematic and persistent bullying and harassment in that organisation. So it's very costly, but it's not necessary to do a good job. And there are really good techniques and ways of leaning in, transparency is really important. Being very clear about what's good behaviour, that's very important. Everyone should have their actions determined by not just what they do, but how they do it and there needs to be action on that. So people who do very poorly, you help them, but if they persist in bad behaviour, then they don't get promoted or they have to leave the organisation. And we haven't been doing that.

Clare Walsh:

I want to come back to that question of cost that you referenced just very quickly, but let's just stay with this theme of leadership for a moment. I think there might be a perception sometimes that it's a very opaque approach that people take to managing situations of bullying and harassment and you're exactly right about leadership and that leadership needing to be at all level. But Renee, you've got vast experience not just running a large organisation, but also a dispersed organisation where you have staff located in multiple different locations around the country. And I'd be interested in your perspective on that question of leadership and any shifts that you've seen over the span of your career and senior roles, hopefully some positive shifts, but some observations would be very handy.

Renee Leon:

I think that leadership is really central to the prevention of bullying and like so many matters where we try to improve performance, prevention is undoubtedly better than cure in this case. So I think that the spectrum that leads to bullying is the whole spectrum of good leadership down to poor leadership that starts with really

expecting of all of our leaders, really great, inspiring behaviour towards their staff and that they would be as leaders modelling and expecting of the people below them, really positive, respectful workplace behaviour. And when I came to be Secretary of Human Services, it's a very large organisation, nearly 30,000 staff distributed over hundreds of sites around the country.

Renee Leon:

Many people suggested that it wouldn't really be possible to do what I'd done in other organisations and lift the standard of leadership behaviour and improve the culture because those kinds of large organisations are really dispersed and far from the centre and senior leaders aren't out there making sure that everything's going as it should. And in fact, if you focus on leadership and the expectations that you have for leaders at all levels to be both displaying and expecting of their teams really positive workplace behaviour, then you can achieve change all the way out to a dispersed frontline. And I think the survey results from the Department of Human Services over the three years I was there, demonstrate that. That it's all about making really clear to your direct reports and for them to their direct reports and all the way down, this is how we behave around here.

Renee Leon:

And Gordon's piece, which I completely endorse. It has to be that people are appraised separately on what they deliver and how they behave. And that the behaviours that you expect are really clear and that when it comes to performance appraisal time, you get a separate score for what you delivered and how you behaved. And that it's not enough to get high scores on delivery and then you get excused for poor scores on behaviour. That you can't actually get promoted or get opportunities or get all of the goodies that people want, if you are not performing at a good level on both delivery and behaviour. And I've implemented that in both the departments I was secretary of and it has very solitary effect.

Clare Walsh:

Renee, if I could stay with you just for a moment when you're trying to lift the performance and the leadership capability of your team, regardless of whether they're your SES officers or your EL1's, what's the things that you need to do? What are some of the tangible things that you might have implemented that have worked? And I'm particularly interested in the context of multicultural contexts or where you've got groups that we know that the statistics will tell us more disadvantage when it comes to bullying or more susceptible I guess, whether that's the people that identify with disability or the LGBTI community or indigenous colleagues.

Renee Leon:

Like all expectations of your leadership, you have to start by setting them. And so you have to be really clear about your expectations about not only a respectful culture, but an inclusive culture and not in a scolding and think pointing way, but in a this is how we'll have a really high performing workforce way. That if you uplift your workforce and make space for everyone to be who they are and give their best at work, then not only will that be good for your team, but it will be good for your delivery. It will actually make you a more productive, more successful team because you'll be drawing on all the strengths of the people who make up your team or your department. So setting that expectation and painting a picture of the positive benefits that flow both for the organisation and for the team in having that culture of inclusivity and respect is the starting point.

Renee Leon:

And then it has to be backed up with capability development. Sometimes people just aren't aware of their unconscious biases or that the ways that they've been behaving are potentially hurtful or offensive to groups within their team. We're all familiar sadly with the experience of casual sexism and casual racism. And there's no excuse for either of those, but it's true that unless you educate your workforce about how what they say,

thinking it's a joke would actually be really hurtful and offensive to people in the workforce. And then you can make it easier for people to understand this is what I have to do to create the culture where all of my team are going to be able to be their best. And then of course, you just have to back it up with sanctions if you don't.

Clare Walsh:

Thank you, Renee. Adam, where you sit as a Public Service Commissioner in Victoria, you get to have an enterprise wide look at this set of issues, as opposed to an organisationally specific approach. And I'm really interested in the perspectives you might have on that. How do you think about the best practices you're seeing across the Victorian state government or areas for improvement? What's the approach, is there a difference of approach say in the states that we might be seeing in the Commonwealth and have you got some experiences or examples that you could provide us where you show that we can leverage some better practices?

Adam Fennessy:

Yeah. Thanks so much, Clare. And I'll start by firstly, thanking you and Gordon and IPAA ACT for hosting such a critical discussion with Renee and I. And also acknowledge I'm coming from or Wurundjeri country of the people of the Kulin nation in Melbourne. So I am now in a very fortunate position to see it as you said, Clare, from across the whole of the Victorian public sector. I also work closely with my public sector commissioners in other states and territories across Australia, as well as New Zealand and we have a very active discussion about that as well. So we see it from the macro whole of jurisdiction and then whole of national, including New Zealand. I think the first point that is fair to say is that we do take this issue very seriously in Victoria and we can do more. And I think that would apply to every public sector.

Adam Fennessy:

There are some public sector jurisdictions that do it really well, there are some that maybe could improve, but I don't think anyone of our jurisdictions have really got this sorted out. It's a long term challenge for the public sector, including because of the complexity and the distributed nature of the public sector. We've also seen quite specifically additional challenges over the last two years in dealing with behaviours in a hybrid or remote working context. The first thing I'll say and answer to a question is like all jurisdictions, we take a very deep survey through our People Matter Survey. This year we had about 100,000 respondents to that, so it's a really deep data driven approach. What we know from our annual survey and what the data tells us is the organisations that perform the best in countering bullying and harassment have strong leaders who set the tone.

Adam Fennessy:

They invest in their leaders to effectively manage and build harmonious teams and deal with misconduct, which picks up Renee's point about capability, and they build a positive organisational culture. So that really helps. And then they have that very specific staff training on how to be aware of bullying, how to self-resolve issues, what to do with bystander behaviour and then very clear transparent communication, particularly during change about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Now to me, that would be great if we saw that data and thought we can act on that. What we know is that it takes very sustained efforts and it's not enough to know what the best organisations do. You really have to work very persistently with particularly underperforming organisations or parts of organisations that are underperforming. When I was a secretary of Victorian Government Department, I learned just how difficult it was to pursue some people who for years had been poorly behaving.

Adam Fennessy:

I used to get feedback from my own staff. It's too difficult, we can't get the evidence, they'll take us to court. I used to get all sorts of feedback. I thought that it was unacceptable to have that behaviour amongst leaders.

And I used to have debates to say, we'd need to pursue these, even if we're not sure we've got enough evidence for the courts, we've got to look after natural justice and due process. But the strong signal it sent pursuing one or two instances of very poor workplace behaviours that, sent a really strong signal to an organisation. And then along with investing in positive culture, you can really make an impact. To me, particularly coming out of COVID when we'll have a lot of exhaustion and latent fatigue, how do we redouble our efforts across workplaces? And I think Gordon, your publication in the conversation of your article is so timely because if this was easy to solve, we would've solved it years ago, it's still here. And we can also learn from each other across Australian and New Zealand jurisdictions.

Clare Walsh:

Thanks, Adam. I want to pull a thread that you started there, which is your experience with reluctance and I guess a very risk averse approach if I can verbal you a little bit of some parts of an organisation to take this on. And I wonder whether what you're talking about is a completely different way of looking at things. What you described was a managerial approach almost to start with. And then the other way of looking at it is a people-centric a person-centric approach, which we are hearing more talked about in that context. Gordon, I don't know whether you've got a perspective on that in terms of fundamentally looking at this differently in terms of how we manage it within the workplace.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer:

Yeah. There probably has been a lot of hiding things because, and I don't think people want to hide it, but they also don't want to destroy or damage their institution or the reputation, but it does come. I think that's right, it's a person centred thing. If you treat your colleagues and your employees as people, you treat them like adults, then you expect them to behave like adults. And in most places of human interaction, we expect a certain level of decency or formal behaviour. And I think being very clear as Renee said around that, but it is treating people with respect and it's expecting that they will treat others with respect. But you do have to explain to them or talk through and let them experience it what that means in practice of what good behaviour, what good professional development session is, what good staff training is. People just don't know that automatically, you do have to engage with them on that.

Clare Walsh:

Renee, what's your experience been with making that shift, I suppose, from managerial to person centred approaches?

Renee Leon:

When we talk about needing to have a person centred approach about the resolution of complaints of bullying, often we are talking about it once it's got to the stage of a formal complaint. And at that point, as Adam's described, you end up with a whole lot of anxieties about natural justice and how will we go in the fair work commission and can we make the evidence stand up in court? And of course you do have to go through formal processes in a way that's compliant with legal and administrative fairness. But I always think if you've got to that point, it's because you've neglected a whole lot of warning signs along the way. It's a bit like what we always remind people when talking about domestic violence, that initially starts with a lack of respect. It doesn't go from zero to violence usually.

Renee Leon:

And so if we've allowed people to behave poorly in the workplace for years and not set different expectations and continue to promote them and not brought it up just as a matter of performance feedback, as soon as poor behaviour starts to emerge, well then of course people don't ever change their behaviour and you end up down at the formal complaint end of the spectrum. So my plea would be to start much earlier with setting

expectations and pulling people up at the early stage of any poor disrespectful behaviour emerging. Once you get to formal processes, then of course you have to realise that someone who's got to the point of complaining formally, they also didn't go to that straight away. They have also endured a whole lot of poor behaviour before they finally decided this is got so bad, I'm going to have to actually put in a formal complaint because no one is doing anything about it.

Renee Leon:

And therefore you do have to recognise that they are already probably quite scared, quite damaged, quite afraid and often rightly afraid that they'll be the one who suffers reprisals rather than the person about whom they're complaining. So having processes that are supportive, where there's someone in the organisation they can talk to that's not their direct manager, because their direct manager might be the person who's doing the bullying or might be friends of the person who doing the bullying. So having a supportive, safe, confidential place that they can speak to and that will keep in touch with them so that if the processes go on, as I'm afraid, they unfortunately do sometimes for a long time that they aren't left hanging, wondering if they've been forgotten. So we say that that is how you should help victims of crime supportive, engaged person centred. And that is also what you have to do for people who have got sufficiently stressed and distressed about their workplace that they've lodged a formal complaint.

Clare Walsh:

That point about prevention is a really important one. You don't want people to get to the end of a continuum, which you've just described. No one wants to be in that place. And so therefore, what interventions do you put in place as you've described, at the front end as a preventative measure. But the other thing of course is that bullying and harassment is known to cost organisations significantly. Now whether that's in sick leave, time away from the workplace, workers compensation, all of the other impacts to an organisation are costly. So we know that good prevention strategies minimise the cost to the individual and also to the organisation. And yet we don't always invest, it would seem, in the resources that we need to address at the front end. And Adam, I know that you've been doing a lot of thinking around this. I'd be interested in your perspective.

Adam Fennessy:

Yeah. So firstly, I agree Clare, with your point that if we don't manage this, we have sick leave, we have time away, we have workers compensation as well as the fact that it's not a good organisation to be in and people cannot thrive. So there's the specific cost, which is measurable as well as the broader impact on an organisation's ability to perform and thrive and the people within it. The other issue I've been looking at is talking to our Work Safe Authority in Victoria, which is our workers compensation statutory authority looking at public sector. If we can take a more preventative measure, preventative investment approach to better workplace cultures, we know that the impact on the long term exposure of workplace claims will be quite significant. And conversely, if we don't do anything about it, that exposure will continue. And so to me, there's both the organisational costs as well as the whole of system costs.

Adam Fennessy:

And they're quite specifically quantifiable and we are doing some very constructive work with Victoria WorkSafe around both mental injury, mental impact and return to work processes. And I've reflected with colleagues that when physical workplace injuries became a huge issue in say construction, mining, heavy industries, boards would be asking for very specific reporting on lost time injuries, slips and falls and so on. So to me, better reporting and understanding on mental injuries and to put it positively, the quality of workplace behaviours and culture should be as critical to boards as the more traditional easier to physically identify slip and fall. So we're seeing that. And the other point I'd love to add is that the incredibly important work of Kate Jenkins through both her earlier respected work report, which was about women's safety and then set the

standard, two issues that really emerged from there is you've got to have much more transparent systems and much more person focused supportive systems.

Adam Fennessy:

So to me, they come together. If we get these much more thorough person centred approaches in place, there'll be the benefit or the avoided cost to the organisation. And then if we're looking at say public sector as a whole, we'll be able to quantify those costs, which result in either lower workplace premiums and better places to work. Or if we don't do anything about it, we will literally be able to see that cost all the while remembering that for every dollar cost, there is the impact on a person's quality of life at work. So to me, I'm very excited about that work, because we know from other sectors including health, that prevention is far better than cure. And there are lots of different things that Renee's already mentioned as well as Gordon around investing in training staff, investing in workplace culture, investing at all levels. So to me, our data tells us we've got a problem. My view is there's a lot we can do about it, it's how do we take that very seriously and really hold ourselves to account to see progress.

Clare Walsh:

So a couple of times in this conversation we've talked about transparency or the issue of transparency has come up. And in your paper, Gordon, you point to how important it was when the secretaries all agreed at Secretaries Board for census results to be publicly made available and including in those census results are the bullying and harassment results that any organisation or department gets every year. I'm interested in all of your perspective, one on how much of a game changer that was. But secondly, is it enough? Is there more we need to do in that transparency piece to hold ourselves more accountable?

Dr Gordon de Brouwer:

So I think it is a game changer for the Commonwealth and the states and territories have been well ahead of the Commonwealth on this. So Commonwealth could learn a lot from states and territories. I think the fact that it came out two years ago is a game changer. And I think secretaries would've known the consequences of their decision and good on them for doing that. They've probably been in two steps I've seen. The first year, it was very hard to find the results they were on the APSC website, but very hard to collate, in fact, we had to collate them here in IPAA office. Second year, yes, there's a bit more information and a bit more analysis, but not really delving into what are the characteristics and why there are differences between organisations and what are the tools to do it?

Dr Gordon de Brouwer:

So I think we're at the start of something at the Commonwealth of understanding why, so transparency is really good and that's the driver. I'd go further on the transparency side, I think it becomes much more important if you really want to change the behaviour significantly, you have to delve into the reasons why and that has to be public. And I do think saying publicly, we don't want the levels of bullying that we've got in our organisations. We want to do better and we could at least halve those rates in the next five years because we do have the toolkit. The things that we've talked about today are the toolkit and making a commitment is another form of transparency. It holds your feet to the fire on we're not going to let this disappear if it turns out to be inconvenient, we want to achieve it and we'll give it a red hot go.

Clare Walsh:

Renee, what do you think?

Renee Leon:

I think it was a fantastic thing to make the results publicly available. I was part of Secretaries Board when that decision was made. And so I thank and congratulate my colleagues for being prepared to do that. A bit like we have said as leaders, that it's important for us to set expectations for our staff and to hold people to account if they're not meeting them, I suppose the next step in the Commonwealth will be for secretaries to take seriously as a group and in their relationship with the public service commissioner, what should be the outcomes for departments that don't seem to be making headway. At the moment, the performance framework in the Commonwealth is geared very much to delivery and if you damage your department in the process, there don't appear to be any consequences for secretaries. And I'd like us to move to a stage where there's sufficient commitment to the importance of leadership and positive workplace culture that a secretary would feel.

Renee Leon:

It was career limiting to have 25% of their departments saying that they were being bullied, it certainly should be. We should be doing something very positive to change that as Gordon said, departments should be expected to improve those results. And the Department of Finance could probably assist with analysis of the data because I know this was occurring when the Secretaries Reform Committee was in place prior to the Thodey Review, that the census data was being mined and analysed to demonstrate the cost impact and the productivity drivers that you get from positive leadership and the reduction of bullying. And so it's not just a nice to have, I think we could make the economic case that you'll get better results out of the public service if you're providing positive workplace culture and that that's the performance that we expect secretaries to be demonstrating and showing results in their census scores.

Clare Walsh:

And it's so interesting, isn't it? In terms of if we look at the gains that have been made in issues of gender equality, it's having that evidence that has been really critical to that. You demonstrated with really clear evidence that was irrefutable and I guess that's what you're talking about. So Adam, have the states and territories made more progress in this area than the Commonwealth. What do we have to learn from the state and territories?

Adam Fennessy:

Well, with my earlier caveat that no state or territory is perfect, we do have a lot to learn. Victoria has been publishing our People Matter Survey census reporting for many years now. We all know that you measure what matters and that better reporting is a game changer. What is interesting is I still get pushback from some of my colleagues and some heads of statutory authorities saying, "Oh, do you have to publish these like you have in the past?" And my short answer is yes, and then here are the reasons why. What's interesting is I often get push back on things like survey fatigue, or "it takes too long to turn around my results." To me, there is no better time to work on your workplace culture than right now and every year and all the time.

Adam Fennessy:

Survey fatigue is an issue and what we've moved to is a deeper survey one year and a lighter touch survey the next year, but to get annual results on how your people are going to me is so important. And my other comment and you've already made this point, Clare, is that in diversity inclusion, we've learned that good, transparent reporting makes a huge difference. We've seen the impacts that with WGEA, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, has had across the Commonwealth into the private sector. In Victoria, as some people will be aware, we now have the Victorian Gender Equality Act and through Dr Niki Vincent, we have the first Commission for Gender Equality in the public sector. Her role has just come through its first annual cycle and she now has mandatory measurement and publication of gender equality data. And that includes and this is where there is an overlap, targets on the reduction of negative behaviours such as sexual harassment.

Adam Fennessy:

She's also very explicitly reporting on the gender pay gap and so on. And that does have a very big impact and she's also working closely with Mary Wooldridge from WGEA so we can learn at different levels. And to me, some of the shifts I've seen in things like, or some of the gender equality and inclusion levers really have shifted because organisations can't hide anymore, particularly when there's comparative reporting. So I think that makes a big difference. I know our own Department of Treasury and Finance is now working on a very specific project on reporting women's economic disadvantage in Victoria including gender pay gap. So it's really important to see this picked up by our central agencies. And I also think that the Thodey Review has given us some wonderful insights into the links between cost impacts, productivity drivers and the benefit of diverse, inclusive, high performing teams.

Clare Walsh:

So Adam, there has been a suggestion that we should look at committing to halving the rates of bullying and harassment over the next five years or within five years. Do you think that it's helpful to set that ambition and is it possible and are people doing that, are organisations willing to do it?

Adam Fennessy:

I think there's generally reluctance with targets. In my experience they really work, they don't work in every context they are situational. To give you one example, when I first became a secretary, we were very focused on gender equality or gender inequality. And in my organisation, I had 28% women in our senior executive and we were recommended a target of 40% as a strict target and we decided not to lock in failure so we went for a 50% target and we got there in about two years. And that was just through changed and more conscious recruiting processes to make sure that merit was maintained. Very simple things like gender balance panel, gender balance shortlist and that helped counterbalance some of the perceptions that a target could cover up merit in that case. I presented late last year at the Royal Commission on Disability, the Commonwealth Royal Commission on Targets for Employing People with Disability or people who identify with disability in the public sector.

Adam Fennessy:

We shifted our numbers in Victoria through better reporting, which made us put in place better systems from about, I think it was about 2.8% to 3%. Now we're at 6% and our next stretch target over the next five years is 12%. Now, some people are very worried are we going to get there? Are we setting ourselves up not to succeed, but targets like that make us disrupt our thinking and think about things very differently. So to me my lived experience with targets is they can feel difficult, they can feel like we may not get there. They change the way we think and Gordon has already said, we need to think differently about this. So to me, we know all about targets in government, we have so many of them in our budget papers. So I'm a big believer in targets because I think they work and the discomfort they cause leads to the disruption to bring about more specific change.

Clare Walsh:

Thank you. Now I'm running out of time unfortunately. We could talk about this subject I think for hours and hours, but we probably won't do that. I'm going to ask each of you the same question to wrap up, but before I do that, I will ask one more question of you, Renee. And this is one that I really feel I should ask because it has been put to us by the IPAA Future Leaders Committee members. And that is, is there anything specific about bullying and harassment in the APS, that means it manifests differently to other workplaces?

Renee Leon:

Look, I don't mind ending on a positive by saying that I actually think the public service is reasonably better advanced than many workplaces in actually having at least a stated adherence to certain values and code of conduct behaviours. And that it's more in the breach than in the policy settings that our problems lie. I think that the pressure on the public service to deliver and sometimes I'm afraid the tone at the top that comes from the overall leaders of the public service system and I mean by that in the political sphere, is such that people are often exposed to pressure and behaviours that they are not well equipped or sufficiently self-aware to learn to moderate their behaviour and not take it out on others. And I know high pressure workplaces occur across both public and private sector. I think what's incumbent on us is to make sure we are constantly reminding ourselves of our north star values about what kind of workplace the public service is and making sure that then behaviour is consistent with that.

Clare Walsh:

Thank you. I am running out of time. So I would like to just ask Adam and then Gordon you the last word, any final observations or thoughts or messages you'd like to pass on to the listeners to the podcast?

Adam Fennessy:

Yeah. So my final thought is we do have to take a data driven and people focused approach. And I find in this space, we have to be as leaders, relentlessly persistent takes a lot of persistence. And the upside as well as a positive impact on our organisations and therefore better services for our communities, better support for our ministers. It also makes such a big difference, a positive difference to the lived experience of our staff and in my own experience, it makes our organisations better places and more enjoyable places to work. So there's so many upsides and it requires that persistence and that data driven approach.

Clare Walsh:

Thanks Adam. And Gordon.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer:

Well, amen to all of that, but there's no dichotomy to my mind between delivery and public servants achieving the purpose of serving the government of the day and the people that they serve. There's no dichotomy between delivery and having a respectful workplace. In fact, if you want to sustain delivery over time, if you want to be a government that's in power for more than one term or one year, then actually sustaining that delivery matters and good behaviour, decent behaviour is going to help you achieve that.

Clare Walsh:

Thanks very much Gordon. And I guess if I get a chance to say one final thing, that is that one of the things that we're struggling with in the public service at the moment is a very tight labour market and a very competitive labour market. And these things, the behaviour of your organisation, the culture of an organisation is a very big part of your competitiveness to attract talent into your organisation. So I think that's a part of it as well. But can I say thank you, Renee and Adam and Gordon for joining us today and for sharing your insights. It's been a really fascinating and a very important conversation, I'm very pleased that you could join me here to have it. That brings today's Work with Purpose podcast to a close. Thank you to our listeners for joining us and goodbye for now.

David Pembroke:

And a big thanks to Clare Walsh, Deputy Secretary Business Enabling Services at the Department of Finance, for hosting today's very important discussion about bullying and harassment. And a big thanks also to our panellists who came on for today's discussion. To you the audience, thank you so much for coming back once again. If you do have time for a rating and a review on your favourite podcast catcher, it does help the

program to be found. So that would be gratefully received if indeed you have the time. A big thanks to the team at IPAA for putting the program together today and also to the technical team at contentgroup for their ongoing support for Work with Purpose. Thanks to you, the audience, for coming back once again. We'll be back at the same time in two weeks, but for the moment it's by for now.

Voiceover:

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