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# TRANSCRIPT OF PODCAST

## WORK WITH PURPOSE

EP#6: COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE with CHERYL-ANNE MOY, Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer, Department of Home Affairs

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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. Thank you for joining me. Today we speak to Cheryl-anne Moy, another senior Australian public servant with a lot on her plate. As a deputy secretary, Cheryl-anne's day job is managing the seven divisions in the federal department of Home Affairs that deal with corporate capability, not only for the department, but the Australian Border Force. During her career in the APS, Cheryl-anne has managed many large and high-profile programmes including regional processing, children in immigration, ministerial and parliamentary entitlements, and social welfare programmes in key areas including retirement, rural, regional areas, and employment. Prior to joining the Australian public service, Cheryl-anne had a successful career in banking, finance, and fraud investigations. As part of her responsibilities in helping the response of the APS to the COVID-19 pandemic, Cheryl has played a key role in contributing to a number of task forces, including the National COVID-19 Coordination Committee and the Chief Operating Officer Committee. Cheryl-anne joins me from her office at the Department of Home Affairs. Cheryl-anne, welcome to Work with Purpose.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: Thank you David. Thanks for having me.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Listen, before we get into COVID-19, in the introduction I mentioned that you did once work in the private sector in banking and finance and fraud investigations. What drew you into a career in the public service?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: It was quite interesting. So I always considered that I worked in a public service environment. I was always facing clients and actually after my first daughter was born, I made the decision to take some time off and then when I was looking at what I was wanting to do in the future, I decided to join the public service in the regional office in Redcliffe in Queensland.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Okay. And what was your first job in the APS?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: My first job was processing unemployment claims with Department of Social Security at Redcliffe Regional Office and progressed from there to many other parts of the organisation.

DAVID PEMBROKE: So you really started as an entry level, really into the APS?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: I started as an APS one.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Wow. And what are your memories of that time back as an APS one in the Redcliffe office?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: Look, they're great memories. It was a great team to work for and work with. I learned so much about working with a team that's supporting people who are at their most vulnerable and I also learned a lot about managing, not only the clients, but also staff. So it's invaluable lessons and something I recommend to everyone to be able to work in many different areas and get lots of different varied experience, it unlocks a lot of potential in people.

DAVID PEMBROKE: I certainly think Carmel McGregor told me great stories of the past, sort of in the era of, I think it was Sue Vardon where she used to make even the senior executives go and spend time in the offices so that they could see what the sorts of stresses and worries and concerns that people were coming in with, is that your memory of that time?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: That is, well that is exactly my memory. I worked with Carmel and with Sue in Centrelink and I was always absented from those types of arrangements because I had actually come from there and understood how it worked and it worked in so many different areas in both South Australia and Queensland in the Department of Social Security and Centrelink. So I was lucky I didn't have to go back out and do those, but I did spend a lot of time going back out and updating my knowledge and keeping abreast of what the issues were at the front line because that's why we're here to support them. 80% of it, 80% of our people serving the people at the front line and our job was to make sure that they're able to do that the best possible way within the government policy that we were serving.

DAVID PEMBROKE: So how did you feel on that day, most recently when the announcements were made around the various payments and you saw those big lines out in front of the various services Australia offices around Australia. How did that make you feel?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: Well, I felt for my colleagues at Services Australia, it's a unenviable position to be in to have the most unemployment figures coming at you in such a short period of time and certainly unplanned. This wasn't something that was necessarily something that we all saw in terms of the size of the impact. I think the other issue is, of course the first thing we all did in the COO Committee was turned around and said, "How many people can we get ready to be able to go over and help Services Australia process those claims so that people got their money as soon as possible that they're entitled to?"

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: And right down to one of my support staff was a very junior staff member, he was very nervous, but he was packed over to Services Australia. He's only just come back today. And so he spent a close few weeks over there and loved the experience, enjoyed it, and actually said he grew so much, he was quite surprised. He was very, very nervous on his first day, but by the end of it, he was processing claims, talking to people on the phone, and they did a great job in training him and acquitting him to do that job.

DAVID PEMBROKE: What sort of impact do you think that this mobility of the APS staff and particularly those staff members who have had the opportunity to serve in the various call centres? We had Kathryn Campbell on a couple of weeks ago, a couple of programmes ago, and she was reflecting about the collegiality and that real sense of service amongst the people who had that opportunity. Do you think it will have a lasting impact as people do return to their normal day jobs?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: I think it will. I think you can't undo the experience that people have got and as I said earlier, one of the best things you can do is work outside of your comfort zone. It increases your confidence, it increases your ability to confront the next tackle, or tackle the next issue. It gives you resilience. I don't think that anything will be lost from people having done that. And there's 145,000 of us approximately across Australia, every day we turn up to work and we all pull in the same direction, it's no mean feat, it's a great effort for the Australian Public Service every single day. But when these sorts of things happen and you see people rise to that level of being

even more collaborative than sometimes they need to be, people went out of their way to assist people to be able to do their jobs and to be able to serve Australians and get people the entitlements they need. It is one of those things that you become a public servant for, to be able to deliver those sorts of services in times of good and times of crisis.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And I do wonder whether or not there will be also those additional benefits where friendships will be made that wouldn't have been made otherwise, where people will know each other and over time come to know, trust, respect. And as they come around, that'll be an experience they'll have forever.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: Absolutely and it will cause some people to reconsider what they might've thought about their own career. They might've thought that what they're doing now is what they can do. Whereas they now have different avenues open to them. They know they can do different things. They know they can take different challenges and move out of their comfort zone. So the ability for people to put their hand up now and say, "I actually might go over and work in Services Australia, it's not something I might've ever thought of before, but I'll go work there for three or four years and get that experience and take it back to the..." For example, in our space, they bring it back into a national security and immigration environment. It is a tremendous gain to the organisation for people to bring those skills back into Home Affairs and be able to apply them to their current roles or to other roles that they decide they want to move to.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Now you're a key member of the Chief Operating Officer Committee and we did have Kathryn Campbell, the chair of that committee on the programme a few weeks ago. Is one of the issues that you're discussing, how do we sustain things or that mobility in the APS, in the workforce? Is that something that you're actively looking at this point in time?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: It is. So mobility is always an issue. There's been legacy issues around people thinking that mobility is about moving people around who might not be particularly good at their jobs, where they are and it so is not about that. Mobility's a critical process to ensure that the public service is able to respond during these periods of time. If you look at any of the deputies and the FAS and the Assistant Secretaries who have taken the COVID-19 response and run with it, all of them have varied experience. They've worked in lots of different departments. They've taken different functions, they've worked in policy programmes, delivery. They push themselves outside of their comfort zone to be able to learn new skills and harness those for when they need them in new jobs.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: And each one of those brought that skillset to the COO Committee and the COO Committee has done a fabulous job in a very short period of time. I'm looking forward to what we can do during our new normal period in terms of some strategic work and one of those will be around mobility. But the more we have people who have varied experience across the public service, the better chance we have.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Yeah. So tell me, what is your sort of COVID-19 story in terms of when was the day that it sort of struck you that this was going to be different and what were you doing at that time and what did you stop doing and what did you start doing very quickly?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: So back in early March we sort of went, what we would call, into full COVID-19 response and that was in regard to a few issues. So I suppose in terms of professionally, there was the knowledge that we have Emergency Management Australia within our department. [inaudible] Australia deals with many things from bush fires to pandemics. On this occasion, stand aside to the EMA, the Emergency Management Australia organisation, the prime minister stood up the National Coordination Mechanism and when he stood up the National Coordination Mechanism, we staffed that entirely from the department primarily. And we also brought in staff from different departments such as industry, infrastructure, prime minister and cabinet, and the National Coordination Mechanism worked across industry, state government, and territory governments to look at all of the issues that were being caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that were not health related.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: So the good old issue of toilet paper on the shelves was one of the first things that the National Coordination Mechanism worked on. They worked with industry, they worked through supply chains, we had staff who had worked in many different areas, but I don't think in their entire career they thought they'd be worrying about the supply chain of toilet paper to a Woolworths, Coles, or an IGA or a [inaudible 00:12:46]. So it was quite interesting. And this again comes down to the experience people have, being able to apply that to absolutely anything that they have to work on. So the National Coordination Mechanism took about 300 of our staff and they worked with industry, state territory and worked to fix things like supply chains. They worked on issues as issues were raised that were non-health related, that were about things happening in the community, they worked across many different sectors of education, law enforcement and policing, food, agriculture, transport, banking.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: They worked across a large [inaudible] of industries to sort out issues that were happening in those industries, but also to provide that collaborative and collegiate connections across all of the different layers of government and those industries. So they literally did coordinate, I think more than 70 formal discussions around different issues. And while you won't see a lot of the work that they did, the night and day work did come to fruition in terms of decisions made around travel bands, different restrictions of how industry managed the supply chains, lifting certain restrictions so trucks could travel at different hours of the night to get to the Coles and Woolies, those sorts of things. So about 300 people into that. We also supported the National Coordination Commission in prime minister and cabinet. So I've got some staff over there who were supporting the commissioners. One of our secretaries, sorry, one of our secretaries... Our secretary is one of the people on that commission. He provides support and advice into the commission, into that power. So we've got that area supported.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: We've also provided around 106 people to Services Australia and we've also got people in Department of Health and one into APSC. So, when this happened in terms of being identified as a pandemic, obviously the impact on the economy, the impact on Australians in terms of health, those triggers very quickly led to action across all of the APS. And we were one of those, I think probably the most important thing about the COO committee is being able to pull together and deliver the level of consistency across departments and to create an environment of ease, if I'd use that word, which meant that all of the department's contingency planning was similar in terms of the entitlements to staff, we were able to get ahead of the curve on questions and issues, we were able to share work that had already been done in one department, give it to another department, rebadge it. It was all the same. It was

consistent which gave the APS a level of consistency and comfort that things were moving forward in a very managed way.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: And it was very managed. There was no panic, there was no shrill voices. It was incredibly professional and I really do look forward to what we can do in the more strategic work. So I only see more good things coming out of the COO Committee. I'm really looking forward to the work we can do there.

DAVID PEMBROKE: It's interesting because, correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding is that the Chief Operating Officer Committee, the COO Committee was established really as a strategic entity really to look at one APS and to take the government's response to the Thodey Review and to start to implement that, but pretty well as soon as it was stood up to undertake that work, it actually had to do this very operational work. Is that correct?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: Yeah. So it is true. The COO Committee was stood up under the Secretary's Committee to work with the Secretary's Committee on the implementation of APS reform and other issues that the secretary's committee wished to consider that were whole of government. I think we had two face to face meetings before we very quickly managed the online meeting arrangements, which have worked brilliantly. So those first two meetings face to face was all we had, but the benefit of having a lot of good COOs in the room from large and small departments is that you get a good perspective of the entire picture of the APS. And COOs are used to moving very quickly and doing what they need to do very quickly. So it was a great team to stand up and it was just perfect timing really. We couldn't have been lucky with the timing that it was stood up earlier.

DAVID PEMBROKE: But also a different role, quite a different role, isn't it really? Because all of a sudden you're shifting into a very operational focus, whereas the original intended focus wasn't meant to be that at all. So the governance and the operating rules around it must've had to have been stood up on the spot so to speak.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: We're very flexible. Very flexible. It's one of those things that the governance and the terms of reference were supportive of what we needed to do during COVID-19, so it was set up quite flexibly to begin with. But the good thing is again, the level of experience, which is why I'm passionate about staff that as they come through the APS levels and the EL levels, getting as much experience as they can at their level and across government is critical. Because if we'd had a group of COOs sitting in that room who had all worked in their own department for 30 years and had not done other things, it would have been a very different picture about how we could support the rest of the APS. But the skill sets in the room were amazing and we were able to very quickly come to agreement and come to solutions for all of the issues that were put forward. And there was many of them, as you'd imagined, many of them as we were going through each day.

DAVID PEMBROKE: I can only imagine, a very full agenda, I'm sure, every day. Now listen, one of the parts of the programme is that we take questions posed by IPAA's Future Leaders Committee. And I have a question here from Deanne Allan from the Attorney General's department and her question to you is, "The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in large scale change to businesses as usual across the public service. What are the main adjustments that younger or newer future leaders need to make in order to make their best contribution?"

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: Okay, so this might be a little bit repetitive, but I'll add to it a little bit. The most important thing is to understand the APS, not just your role or your department, know what functions sit in other departments and be interested now. Don't be interested when there's a problem, be interested every single day about what you can learn about the APS because it is a very big organisation. So get as much experience across APS as you can, whether you're working in another department or working with other department colleagues, keep these relationships that you've had while you've been working at Services Australia or in other places during COVID-19. Work with people on implementations. Don't be afraid to push yourself out of that comfort zone into new functions. And understand everything from the different perspectives of policy, programme, and delivery.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: So sometimes people get set themselves into delivery or to programme. You actually need to understand the full supply chain of what we provide to the Australian community. So when you need to lead through the unknown, the best base you can have is a varied one where you've worked outside your comfort zone, you've been a little bit nervous, but you know how to make the hard decisions and you know how to process and ask for information. So, if you can do all that, it keeps you calm as a leader and it also helps your team be outcomes-focused rather than be nervous themselves. So the calmer you are as a leader, based on your experience and the breadth of your experience and the depth of it, the better leader you'll be, the better your people will be.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Very good advice. Okay. The next question is from Steph McLennan at Geoscience Australia and she asks, "As a senior leader, how are you balancing asking a lot from your staff to deal with during the crisis while recognising that they are also going through huge upheaval and disruption?"

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: That's a really good question and it's very true. Everyone's going to have their COVID-19 story. Some people will have multiples of them and I think, no matter what the issue is, it's really important to be aware of your staff's resilience and understand how resilient they are from week to week. It's not a month by month proposition, things happen in people's lives and it impacts them. So understanding their resilience and their personal work life balance is really important. So for me, I have a fabulous and very committed group of FAS and support staff and my support staff all worked from home during the pandemic and one of them has just come back to work today to do three days in the office.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: And I think I have a fairly flexible approach as do my FAS with their assistant secretaries. So outcomes for me are the most important thing and whilst a lot of my FAS and my AS have children at home and they're doing remote learning, which must be making them pull their hair out. Or some of them are caring for someone who's at risk or they're at risk themselves because they've got asthma or those sorts of issues. All of them have continued to deliver and we keep an eye on each other about how we're going every day. So we do communication. The value of communication can't be understated through times like this. I think our first rule at the beginning in corporate in terms of communicating with our broader group of staff was that communicate, communicate, and communicate and when you think the message has got through, say it again. Because people are working remotely, [inaudible] different things, they've got other things on their mind. They might read at once and think they understand it, but the second time they might actually have more time to revisit because they don't have someone over their shoulder.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: We've worked out our telecom meetings and we actually worked out we quite like them because they save a lot of time and travel between in Canberra sites. So most of my staff has to travel to my office for meetings. We like the fact that they don't have to because they lose half an hour either side for travel and parking, et cetera. So we've decided that we'll probably keep some of those, maybe not for every meeting, but certainly for a large number of them to give them time back in their day. And I think too, it's one of those things about, if you understand why you're a public servant and what you're trying to deliver and what you're trying to do in terms of your contribution, you can only do that through your staff. So, you can't do it single-handedly. 145,000 of us have to do it together. And the 1,450 staff that I have to do it with in my corporate group, we have to do it together.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: So to do that, we need to be quite understanding of each other's issues and help people manage them. And we all have our expectations of what we need to deliver. But during this period of time, I've actually found that people's productivity has been very good, that people have had the flexibility of working their own hours, so I haven't asked people to work between nine and five. If we've had to have a meeting at eight o'clock at night because that suits most people, then that's what we'll do. But it's not a one way game. It's very much working as a team.

DAVID PEMBROKE: So listen, as we move from one part of this, well pretty much that the health crisis, and it would seem, fingers crossed that things have gone well for Australia, that we're in a very good spot. But we know that the next part of the challenge comes through the impacts on society, the impacts on the economy. How are you looking at that in the role that you're playing and how should we as Australians be feeling about that as we go from this transition? As we go from one to the next part of the challenge?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: Yeah. So, it's quite interesting because in the public service, we all have to determine what our new normal is because we will never go back to what we were exactly before this all started. So for us, for example, our work profile has changed dramatically as we've had a considerable drop, about 98% drop in travellers coming through the system. So we've lost 1.11 million people between the 1st of March and the 10th of May, which is a certain drop in the number of people who come through our border every day. But in that process, we've had to relook at what our model is in the APS and where those staff who would normally process travellers, what they move to in terms of what work they're undertaking. So a lot of work has been done in that space and those staff have been redirected to areas where we're trying to protect revenue, where we're making sure that we're picking up any revenue evasion in terms of cargo and international mail.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: So not only have we had to look at that sort of immediately because those staff immediately need to move into those sorts of roles. And we're also processing exemptions of people who wish to travel to and from Australia within the travel restrictions. So, we've moved staff to those new functions that we've got that didn't exist before. But primarily what we're looking at is, what is our new operating model and how does our operating model work in conjunction with the changes that are happening in our environment, in the APS, the broader Australian environment, and then the global environment? So just a couple of examples of that. We've got the changes in travel and what that does in terms of the border. We've got changes in expectations of government, where government will go, "Wow, you got that app out very, very quickly during COVID-19, can I have two of those please?" And the expectation will be that that can be done in normal course of business.



CHERYL-ANNE MOY: So how we harness that innovation and make sure that innovation is not stifled by timing and committees and all sorts of things that might not have had to have been done through the COVID-19 process where we streamlined very quickly. So there's those sorts of things. There's the issue of we have like-minded partners and Five Eyes partners across the world and each of them has experienced COVID-19 very differently to us. So we will have to adjust and understand when we have partnership discussions with them about certain issues. But they'll be coming from a very different place. Places like the US, the UK, Canada, they've had very different experiences in the impact of COVID-19 on their population and on their economy.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Indeed. So there is so much to be done. And again, that's a very quick summary of a very complicated and difficult and fast moving circumstance. How are you going to lead your people in such a way that you can maintain that momentum and you can maintain the energy and the enthusiasm, also given the strain that was put on the public service during the response to the bush fires earlier this year?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: So, it's interesting, isn't it? You have to do all of the normal good leadership and management issues and make sure your people are well rested and that they are taking breaks when they need to and that you give people some downtime. And I personally try to intrude as little as possible on weekends, so I try to keep their weekends golden so that they actually do have the downtime and time to think and breathe. But the issue is going to be is that we won't have any space between what is COVID-19 alert phase, which is what we need to move to from a "catastrophic piece" that we're coming out of where it could have been a whole lot worse than it is. So moving into that alert phase where we need to continue to be alert for local outbreaks and issues that might occur in the community.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: We don't have space between those issues. So, we're not as lucky as, "Well, the bush fires have stopped. We've got another six months before the bush fires start again." We're actually in COVID alert phase and we expect to be in bush fire season probably around end of August this year. So, the pressure is high for people and being able to ensure that they're well rested and managed as we move through each of the phases is particularly important. But interestingly, staff both at the SES, the EL, and the APS level are actually ready for what it means next. We've had a lot of conversations with staff and they're interested and they want to know, "So what are we going to do next? How do we move forward? What's going to change? What can I do? How can I contribute?" So we do rely a lot on that enthusiasm and again, the communication to keep that enthusiasm alive and making sure that people understand what you're doing and why, not just, "This is what we're doing."

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: So being able to have those conversations with people and if necessary, over-communicate, keeps people on more of an interested level versus a disengaged level. So, keeping people engaged for us is the most important thing because our staff have done a tremendous job, they're on the front line in more ways than one, in the ABF, in the visa space, in citizenship, in doing work that many people will never know exists. But they do a great job and they deserve as much information that I can give them about what decisions we're making.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Well Cheryl-anne Moy, thank you so much for your service and not just your service in your current role as Deputy Secretary at the Department of Home Affairs, but for all your service over the years. Thinking back to that young girl who took an APS one role in the Redcliffe office in Queensland all those years ago. So thank you so much and thank you for joining us on Work with Purpose today. And to you, the audience, thank you for tuning in once more and thanks for your ongoing support for the

programme. It's been fantastic actually, been great to get the level of response that we have. So thanks also to our friends and colleagues at IPAA and at the Australian Public Service Commission for their ongoing support in putting the programme together.

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