

# TRANSCRIPT OF PODCAST

## WORK WITH PURPOSE EPISODE 17

### **MICHAEL PEZZULLO AO**

Secretary

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. I begin today's podcast by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Ngunnawal people, and pay my respects to their elders, past, present and future, and acknowledge the ongoing contribution they make to the life of our city, and this region.

I am back and what a good weeks' break it was, west of the dividing range on a very big sheep station just south of Dirranbandi on the New South Wales Queensland border. The wide open spaces, the clear blue skies and stars at night, it was amazing, just so beautiful. Time spent with family in the bush, good for the soul. The country is amazing. After years of drought and struggle, the only thing brighter than the smiles on the faces of our farmers, are the startling green crops, the plump cattle and sheep that cover acre after acre of ground between Canberra and the border. Places like Walgett, Coonamble, Coonabarabran, Baradine, they've never looked better. So, I highly recommend it.

If you are in the market for a holiday, and let's face it who is not? Fuel in the car and off you go. Head west, you will not be disappointed. And let's face it, you won't be going overseas any time soon and if you are looking for a job, there are plenty in the bush. It was the only slight grizzle from the many farmers that I spoke to, was that they simply cannot get people to do the work and with a bumper crop ahead, they need people. It will be in extremely high demand, so opportunity abounds in the agricultural regions of this beautiful country of ours.

Thanks to my good friend Gordon de Brouwer, the National President of IPAA, for filling the chair while I was away. I must admit to a little bit of guest envy. Now, I don't know Jane Halton and I have never met Jane Halton, but what a career and what a contribution, and it was a great interview. Now, I think it's important that the APS takes the time to celebrate the Jane Halton's of the world, because like many of you who are in the APS, you are either world class or I hope, aspiring to be world class. In Jane's case, look at it. To have the career that she did in the APS, 33 years, two secretary roles and then to transition into positions of both global and national leadership in the private and public sector, that says something about our APS. We do celebrate our world champion athletes and scientists and business people as we should, but people like Jane Halton, they are our world champions, public servants, and we should celebrate their achievements.

I know that she will inspire many of you who work in the public service, and it is not just the young women, but it should be everyone. Now, I've had the very good fortune to be part of a gold medal winning Olympic rowing team and the World Cup winning Rugby Union team, not as an athlete, just saying... but I've learnt the importance of setting big goals and striving for big goals, just as Jane Halton has done and I hope that all of you in the APS have that same sort of ambition because it is going to be that competitive attitude and that commitment to excellence and continuous improvement that Australia is going to need from the APS as we deal with what is ahead of us.

Now, from one champion to another. My guest today is a giant of the Australian Public Service. Mike Pezzullo, the Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs is formidable, he's certain about what he wants to achieve and he delivers results. He began his distinguished public service career as a graduate back in

the late 80s in the Defence Department, but after five years and a realistic assessment of his immediate career prospects, he crossed the lake to the International division in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

From there it was to a coveted position on the ministerial staff of the then Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, before serving as the Deputy Chief of Staff to the then Opposition Leader Kim Beazley. He returned to Defence as the Chief Author of the 2009 White Paper and from there to the Australian Customs and Border Protection, where the labour government handed him the complex and difficult task of undertaking a major structural and cultural reform. He was made Secretary of the Department in 2014, before taking on his current role, which is the Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs in 2017.

Secretary welcome to Work with Purpose.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: David hi, how are you?

DAVID PEMBROKE: Before you come to your questions, I would also like to welcome our IPAA future leader, Megan Aponte-Payne who is from the Trade and Investment team at PM&C. She will be asking the questions on behalf of the future leaders. So Megan to you, welcome to Work with Purpose.

MEGAN APONTE-PAYNE: Thanks David.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Secretary, I've really enjoyed preparing for this interview. Going back, reading your speeches, the various articles that you've written, you write well by the way, the testimony that you've given to parliamentary committees and I feel a real intensity about you and a real passion in your work and your views. Where does that come from?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Well David, that's perhaps a rather complex question but I'll try to answer it as briskly as I can because obviously it goes to your world view, your values, your ideological framework, and I mean that in the broader sense of ideology. It also goes to your sense of vocation and the sense of purpose that you bring to that vocation, but if I distil it down, and I've said this in a few background biographical pieces, it probably emanates from my teen years which were by modern standards, very boring. A lot of reading, a lot of reading about history, a lot of reading about things like Australia's involvement in the wars, the post-war reconstruction period. Interestingly given my subsequent career evolution, the Immigration Program and how Australia came to be the nation that it is. I've always had a life-long interest as far as I can remember and certainly back to my teen years, which again I must stress were extremely boring because it involved a lot of reading, and from quite a young age I actually wanted to come to Canberra to be a senior public servant.

DAVID PEMBROKE: How old were you when you decided that?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: This is going to be slightly embarrassing, but probably 11, 12, 13 I'd say.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Wow, and was it a teacher? Was it a parent?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Yes. I remember a couple of... Partly my parents, yes, in terms of less so much the academic or the intellectual framework, that came more from school, but in terms of my parents have a very deep commitment to this country, strong resonance of course with their Italian heritage. My mother, who's still with us

and just recently celebrated her 80th birthday, loves the fact that she came to this great country. The only caveat she ever puts on that, is that she insists on carrying through until the day she dies, her cuisine, as she still insists on calling it. Poor old mum, hopefully she never hears this broadcast, but she refers to English food and Australian food in perhaps less than complimentary terms. But that strong affinity with culture, with heritage, but the sense that Australia is... and I don't say that simply because I'm the Secretary and now responsible for citizenship, but that deep sense of allegiance and commitment to our land, that to use my mother's language and my late fathers language, gave us so much. So that was more on the emotional side and intellectually was more through school.

DAVID PEMBROKE: What was their story? Where did they come from?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Sure, very briefly, Italian. So, dad, who is no longer with us, was born in '37, mum in '40. They were infants and toddlers during the war. My mum's earliest memories were sounds of gunfire, the conflict with the Germans retreating up the Italian peninsula, the allied forces pressing ahead. Her earliest memories are of hiding from conflict and very much a sense of whether it's in Italy or somewhere else, we have to build a better life for our family and we need to go somewhere where that can be realised. In her case, via England where her siblings had gone to and in dad's case, directly to Australia. They arrived in the early 60s.

DAVID PEMBROKE: What careers did they have?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Very typically for migrants of that generation, dad was a manual labourer in construction including on Sydney skyscrapers. They worked on many of the skyscrapers and on the tunnel that we now know as the Eastern Suburbs line up to Bondi. So very physical, manual work. Mum, typically for migrant women of that generation, a combination of household duties and then a second job typically in factories, putting together... as we then did, we used to make a lot of things, speakers, and things like that. She worked in the factory which used to make speakers and the like.

DAVID PEMBROKE: So which part of Sydney did you stay?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Southern suburbs in the St George area.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Okay. That influence at school, where did that come from? You obviously had the ability, but someone fired the interest in you to-

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: A number of teachers. It was a very typical parish school, it was a Marist school, so a lot of emphasis was placed on history, reading, literature and footie, were the referential points and by footie I mean Rugby League.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Okay, did you play Rugby League?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Yes, it was a Marist school so we were-

DAVID PEMBROKE: Which one...? Is it Marist Kogarah?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Kogarah.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Kogarah, okay.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Yeah, the home of Ray Lindwall, Kerry O'Keefe and Tiger O'Reilly, Tiger Bill.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Yeah, and Jubilee Oval not too far away.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Not too far away, born in St George Hospital just next to the Oval or nearby at least.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Okay, right. And what position were you?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Second rower or a prop.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Okay, how did you go? Did you play all right?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Well, I'm probably, as I advance in my more senior years, I get better and better with every passing year.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Did you play first thirteen at school at the MCC or...?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: No, I wasn't quite that-

DAVID PEMBROKE: It was very tough Rugby League competition.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: It's a tough competition.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Metropolitan Catholic Colleges it was.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Yes, MCC.

DAVID PEMBROKE: I was at Marist Brothers North Shore for a year.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Oh okay.

DAVID PEMBROKE: So we used to run into you guys.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: On the other side of the harbour.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Indeed, indeed.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: That's important in Sydney, the other side of the harbour.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Exactly. Now, you have a reputation for-

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: And sorry, in school... Sorry, I should have just said-

DAVID PEMBROKE: Yeah, sorry.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Geography teachers and history teachers. A real passion about history, geography and then that translated into an interest in current affairs as it used to be called then.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Right, and could you take the interest home? Did your parents have the language and the breadth to be able to encourage it as well?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: To some extent, but they encouraged us to be... because they're English from the point of view of reading and writing, wasn't perhaps up to scratch

scholastically but they could certainly functionally converse very well indeed, but they expected us to hit the books hard and study hard ourselves.

DAVID PEMBROKE: But by 11, 12 you were like, "Okay I think I want to serve this country in the public service."

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Yes.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Yeah, okay. Is there a moment? Can you tell me a story of a day where you thought, "Well hang on, this is what I'm going to do?"

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: If we go right back, it might have been when I bumped my head as a baby, I don't know, but we're almost getting to psycho-therapy here but around that period. I can't quite remember the moment, David.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Very good. All right, but you have a reputation for knowing what you want, being deliberate. Where does that come from? That sense of, this is what we've got to achieve, this is what we're going to do. Is that fair reputation, a fair characterisation? Because I have got to say in preparation also for this week, every person I spoke to this week, they said, "Oh who's on Work with Purpose this week?" And I said, "Mike Pezzullo." There was a reaction from everybody. A really interesting reaction from everybody.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: I'm sure it would have been a very positive, favourable one. Uniformly in all cases, but otherwise send me the names. No, it's okay.

DAVID PEMBROKE: No but again, where does that come from?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Well a very strong commitment, partly... I mean we've gone right back to my childhood, it carries the story through to school and early adulthood. We can skip all of that, but a very strong commitment to the idea that in a democracy, decisions have to be made by people who are elected to do so, but they can't then just wish through their pronouncements or through the words that they articulate, for the realisation of those programmes, objectives, activities. They need a functioning system of government and administration to deliver. In our country I think we have less frankly in having the Westminster system, which is impartial and apolitical, and which is responsive to the government of the day. I have just got a very simple view, grand strategy and grand policies settled by those who are accountable to the people, and then it is our job to make it happen.

It is not our job to constrain it. It's not our job to sit in the background as in the satirical model of Sir Humphrey saying, "Geez Minister, you could do that but that would be very courageous," and you end up then taking choices and options away from democratically elected and accountable leaders, who are put in by the voters for one purpose and that is for the betterment of their lives. If you have a public service and a bureaucracy that's always hand-braking... Yes you've got to be prudent, yes you've got to escalate concerns, yes you've got to draw attention to risks, be they legal or financial. That's part of the job, but it's actually not the centre of the job. The centre of the job is doing things.

Now in a democracy, quite properly, the grand scheme of what is done is set through the democratic process by those who are elected to make those decisions. Then at the next tier down, we come in and it's our job to translate those policies which are then formed by values and an ideological programme

and a political programme, because that's what a democracy is. They've got the mandate, it's then our job to make it happen and to be responsive and not to be a hand-brake.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Now I do want to get to COVID very quickly, but just... You've had a wonderful career, you've made a marvellous contribution and I was trying to find-

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: You're making it sound like a retrospective. You called me distinguished before and I'm thinking, "Hang on, is..."

DAVID PEMBROKE: Is there news? Am I getting news this afternoon? Well, you've got an AO. You got an AO this year and we'll come to that and have that conversation in a bit, but I just wanted to try and pick a moment from this career and probably the one that I was drawn to was your time working with Gareth Evans. I happened to work at the Press Gallery around about that time as well.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: I recall, yes.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Very good, yeah. I had that great privilege of being an ABC Radio, current affairs-

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Neither of us have aged, I can tell David.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Gareth Evans I found compelling, as a reporter. I used to love getting him on PM late Friday night and letting him run a bit. He could really talk. I found him great to talk to and we used to have great conversations. What was it like for you? What did you learn from Gareth Evans?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Well Gareth who has remained a friend and indeed over time a mentor of mine and I remain in touch. I've got the highest regard for what he's accomplished and what he's done over a very long and distinguished career. You can say a long and distinguished in relation to someone like Gareth. He's in fact, and I say this about senior people from both sides of politics, a real example, a shining example of what can be achieved through the Australian democratic process that regrettably you don't necessarily see through the filter of the nightly news or the exchanges during question time. As you will recall David, Gareth could give as good as he got, so he was able to return fire.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Yeah.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: You have very senior, and I say this very, very directly because I've served both sides of politics... very senior Australians who have served either in the office of the Prime Minister or in the great offices of State, be it Foreign Minister or Treasurer, who give their professional lives for the betterment of the country from yes, from their perspective obviously. If you're Gareth you're implementing a labour programme. If you're John Howard, you're implementing a liberal programme. What perhaps voters don't always necessarily see, unless they're very close observers of the political scene, is the amount of work that goes into parliamentary committees, into consideration of submissions and reports, into the preparation that they put into it. It is a very, very taxing role.

Now, understandably it is a very fast paced environment. It was fast paced then, it's become even faster now. But not only faster, but now more fragmented through the way in which social media operates. So you get this kaleidoscope where you just see it partially, but if you did a proper documentary of a day in

the life of a senior minister, a Peter Dutton or a Josh Frydenberg in these days, a Gareth Evans or a Paul Keating in those days, what you see are highly intelligent, highly committed Australians, labour or liberal and it's particularly important in my role, but I'm saying this authentically in terms of my observation that I've made over the years, that this is not a function at all of what colour your political stripe is, who are really committed to a programme, delivering on that programme and working effectively through governmental processes to see that realised.

The reason I have given you that long context, Gareth was the full package. Yes he could get involved in the cut and the thrust and I used to sit there in the advisors box and the President would insist of the advisors not reacting. It was pretty hard not to at least rise a smile, particularly when he and Senator Bishop were going toe to toe when Bron was in the Senate, and I think she recalls those days fondly as well. He could also lock the door and you would see this late at night. He'd come back from a function and work on a major set piece speech night after night and get it right. Get every quotation right, check every source and really construct say a speech for Australian Foreign Policy or our future trade strategy or whatever. That passion and that commitment was as intense in the chamber preparing that speech, getting prepared for Cabinet, and I see this constantly with all of the senior members of Parliament that we have the privilege to work with as ministers. It's a side of that trade or that vocation that is regrettably not often seen.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And not well understood either.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: And not well understood, indeed.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Exactly.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: And that's just Gareth. I could say the same thing about John Howard, Malcolm Turnbull, Julia Gillard, I mean everyone that I've served up close, there is that vocational commitment and that passion for delivering on their programme for the betterment of the country.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Okay, so to COVID. You were there, front and centre. Your department, as you've described, that security function of the nation, managing the flow of goods and people. Your people embedded into the supply chains, which is again part of the design that you've put in place, which I think has served us pretty well this time around. What's your COVID story? Tell us your COVID story.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Well just very briefly before COVID specifically, we have worked very hard particularly in the transition from Immigration and Border Protection into Home Affairs, to ensure that we've got in our purpose statement, our mission and our focus on all policies and programmes in fact a three part lens of security, prosperity and unity. We're very explicit about that, not just in terms of corporate slogans as it were, but how do we think about policy, programme and delivery? Is it enhancing Australia's security? Is it enhancing our prosperity? And is it enhancing our unity?

You mentioned supply chains for instance, there's no point in having highly secure supply chains when no goods are delivered, where ports are clogged, where trade is inefficient, where the cost of trade is burdensome, And this is before we get to COVID. Now obviously we're going to have to think about how we reconstruct our trading and travel patterns as the world comes out of



COVID. We have got a very singular focus, and we see it in the way that we've organised our functions, the way we think about our approach to policy purpose and our mission, so prosperity, security and unity, not just security. I want to stress that. Unity goes to things like social cohesion, multi-cultural engagement, our work on countering foreign interference which of course is beside the point for the moment.

Then coming to COVID, we already had a natural instinct. Whether it's colleagues who had come up through the Customs system who absolutely got seaborne trade, airports, the way airports operate. We also had obviously colleagues who worked in the visa processing area. Obviously there had been a very significant diminution of these as there has been over time as the restrictions came in, but you've got very good public servants who are competent, multi-skilled who can then be diverted on to other challenges. We had our staff in Emergency Management, who are very good in terms of crisis preparation and in emergency management. We had other staff in the Aviation Maritime Security and Critical Infrastructure spaces who could be quickly put onto the supply chain blockage issues.

Whether it was supermarkets, I mean we started with the toilet rolls and obviously other matters came to the fore. The fact that you've got a staff... well a department in the first instance and then a workforce that's in that department that has got multiple skills, multiple subject matter expertise, multiple indeed several strands of quite distinct subject matter expertise and life experience, which has then come together into one synthesised body known as the workforce, meant that we had both large scale but we had a reservoir of specialised capability across all of those sectors and more, ones that I haven't even mentioned. This made us able to wield that force, that workforce, against the problems that we had to face.

For instance, earlier in the piece we made a management decision to thin out some work, either because travel had ceased, or visas were starting to cease and mobilise at least 1,000 staff and swing them wherever the problem was. We were able to make ourselves available to our colleagues in Health, in Industry and elsewhere saying, "What do you need done and when do you need it done by?" Of course, when my colleagues say, "Well what can you deliver?" We say, "Well we've got 1,000 people ready to go. What do you need done?" A, that was helpful to them because the cavalry was able to arrive because these tend to be smaller departments, simply just a function of the way the departments are organised.

We said to our staff then and we continue to say it now, "Don't worry about the fact that you're not deeply expert in how supermarkets restock their shelves because you've got to..." Some of the points you make in your introductory remarks David, "You've got the general skills of an Australian Public Servant first and foremost. Secondly you're a Departmental Officer and then thirdly you're a Visa Officer or a Customs Officer. So start with the first of those, you're an Australian Public Servant, you can problem solve, you can work your networks, you can collaborate. You can draw on other connections, both your own personal skills and knowledge plus that of your network and apply yourself to a problem."

We had staff from the get-go working on supply chain issues, trucking curfews. One of the issues that the supermarkets, just to digress momentarily, had in

restocking, was different councils around Australia quite properly outside of a crisis have got different curfew arrangements around trucks going through their back streets. We just worked with the Australian Local Government Association and in some cases directly with mayors and town clerks to say, "Hi we're from Home Affairs and we'd really appreciate you changing your curfew arrangements for the next couple of weeks." Team Australia really came together and said, "Yip, what do you need done?" We said, "We need trucks to be able to go in to restock the back of Coles, Woollies, IGA," and yes, we're onboard. It was a great team effort.

DAVID PEMBROKE: That's fantastic. Now, one of the features of this podcast is that we invite the next generation, so to speak, of IPAA future leaders which is wonderful programme I think, here to encourage the next generation and the quality of the conversation. We've proved now we're the intelligent people in the room, but Megan Aponte-Payne who is with the Trade and Investment team and PM&C, I will invite Megan to address the Secretary with your questions.

MEGAN APONTE-PAYNE: Thanks very much David. Secretary, as you'd know tourism and international education are two really big exports for Australia. At the moment with COVID, how do we get the balance right between protection Australians from a bio-security risk and encouraging the economic recovery that we all need through two of our biggest exports?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: The first thing to be said of course is that it's the medical advice that will guide all policy and that's been consistently the position of not just the Australian Government, but all our Governments that form the National Cabinet. The first port of call will be what does safe look like from a medical point of view? Now, tourism is probably more challenging than international students. Why? Because for so long as you've got a quarantine period, you're building in a lot of time and financial cost in asking someone to in a sense, go to visit your country but quarantine first and then come out of quarantine. So, intrinsically, unless until the medical advice changes and it shouldn't change until it's ready to change, until the science suggests that a change is possible, it's really difficult to see tourism restarting any time soon with that caveat being that of course it's for the medical advice to change before you can start to change your policy setting.

Students, potentially a different case in point as Minister Tehan has made clear, as has Mr Tudge, the acting Immigration Minister, in so far as whether through a pilot or similar programme we can work out a way to create almost like a sterile pathway whereby students can come in, probably now with the lockdown having to be put up again because of the situation principally in Victoria, even on that we might just need to take a pause, but you can see why logically, not for this semester which is pretty much upon us, but you can see a way clear to a different model where if you come into Australia for study, for either a three year degree, typically most students would stay. They might go back to visit relatives between semesters, but typically they'd come here for three years. There is a different value proposition about, "Okay well I'll go into student accommodation, we're in a lockdown quarantine situation, it's sterile. We'll do our quarantine, we can start doing the study for the semester and then of course, we're on campus."

You can create a university COVID-safe corridor with a university bubble and government, certainly as the ministers have indicated, are actively considering

that with the Vice Chancellors but there again, we will be guided by the medical advice in the first instance.

MEGAN APONTE-PAYNE: Yeah, it's a bit early at this stage.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Look to be candid, we're always watchful of a second wave or what is potentially a second wave, and certainly based on historical experiences, there's not a lot of data points of course, for something as significant and as globally impactful as this, but just the modelling, both the biology and the mathematics would suggest that you've got to be watchful of this second wave. Regrettably, and I'm not the clinical expert here so I'm not going to declare it to be a second wave, but there's certainly a spike going on and it will probably be verging on reckless to introduce more risk by way of large scale international travel.

So given that it's late July as we're recording this, that really probably takes out this semester, but we do have time to think about... subject of course to the conditions and the medical advice, to think about the first semester of next year, but obviously that's nothing that I can commit to on this podcast.

MEGAN APONTE-PAYNE: Of course. During a crisis such as COVID, organisations tend to either pull together or fall apart. How have you aligned your organisation now, and what steps have you done to make sure that they pull together?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Well really building on what I said earlier to David, because of the Machinery of Government changes that created initially Immigration and Border Protection and then of course Home Affairs, which was an even larger scale 'MoG', as we call it in our business that you and I are involved in, you do have those deep reservoirs of capability, skills, subject matter expertise around customs, around trade, around travel, immigration programmes, multi-cultural affairs, supply chains, critical infrastructure, aviation maritime security and a number of the other ones that I mentioned to David. What we decided to do is we had really two choices, and indeed in terms of the Home Affairs implementation journey we've been heading in this more cohesive direction in any event. You can say, "Look the department's a holding entity and you do your own thing and you really only come together at a fairly superficial level." You might come together for staff engagement, for HR purposes, and for budget and management. That is one model.

From the outset, the leadership and I and indeed whether or not we have chosen this, it was the direction from the Government in any event, but I think it is the right way to go. So no, what we want to do is become a truly integrated department where, and this is a model probably that is not entirely well understood or at least instinctively appreciated in the public it serves, but it's certainly a model that you find in operational agencies. Who recruits you, trains you, deploys you, is not necessarily who directs your operations.

Just to take the military analogy, in the military you talk about that part of the military which raises, trains and sustains the capability and then... a naval ship for instance, and then that asset is then given to the head of operations and they mix and match the assets as are required. You might have elements from the Airforce, the Navy, the Army. They're still an Airforce, Army and Navy in terms of their pay, their uniforms, their career management, their culture and their legacy. The Australian Army traces its legacies all the way back to the diggers of the First World War, but because you mix and match capabilities

around the task that's required, Defence who take that example further has got a more instinctive feel for what are known as joint operations and the culture that we're building is the same.

We're saying yes, your home division, to use that defence analogy of Airforce, Army, Navy, your home division might be immigration or group of divisions or customs, but where you operate, and it could be for three months, it could be for six months, it could be for three years, you're in a joint operational team. Your operational commander or leader might not actually be your home FAS or branch head because you might be assigned, as I was saying earlier to David, to problem solve the trucking curfew issue or the supermarket resupply issue which was connected to that or the disinformation issue. We wielded together a team of people who were out of our immediate area, our comms area, our website area, but also our community liaison staff who work with ethnic communities, and we said, "Right, your task is countering disinformation." Now that might not be your day job because you might not be in the section that's called the counter disinformation section, so how you wield, mix and match your capabilities and bring those brick together, which potentially might be for years in some cases because some of these teams I suspect will be going through into next year and maybe depending on how the situation unfolds, well into 2022 as well, or it might be for three weeks or three months.

The ethos and the organisational culture that we are instilling is that yes you've got a desk or you've got a workstation, that's where you put your bag down in the morning and that's where your home is, but by the end of the day you might well be deployed under something else and if you embrace that, that's terrific. If you're comfortable with it without necessarily embracing it, that's wonderful. If you're challenged by that, we're going to be transparent with you because it's probably something that we need to work on together to get you to a point of either accommodating that, or we need to help you to do something else because that mobility, that flexibility, that ability to mix and match organisational units to wield into shape these larger organisational constructs, is now our permanent way of operating.

MEGAN APONTE-PAYNE: It sounds like your earlier experience in Defence has been very applicable to the work you're doing now.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Less so the Department of Defence and more so being around Defence operations. I spent a few years in the Army in the Infantry as a Reserve Officer and just being in and around defence operation, rather than the Defence Department, being exposed to Defence operations, that notion of joint operations and that notion of you can go into a headquarters or into a work area and you'll have a space such as here where we are. You'll have coalition members of many countries. You'll have joint teams of Army, Navy Airforce and indeed civilians, including from the intelligence community, but you're all working to a common purpose. It doesn't matter what your uniform is, because you've been... as a team, been put together as a team with specialised skills to optimise all the skills that you put together, rather than working in narrow silos.

I think the public service at large needs to transition from a model where you still have home divisions and branches, because it's also important to have a home base for professional development, career management, performance management, your payroll and et cetera, but you can wield on top of that very flexible working arrangements where you literally encourage your staff to think,

"When you come into work today, if it's an ordinary day your KPI's and things I told you to do last week or asked you to do last week, but it is possible that you'll be deployed onto another team." When staff start to get engaged with it, they go, "Actually this is in some cases quite exciting." In other cases, "Okay I can run with it," but you're being transparent and that starts to change the culture of the organisation because it becomes an expectation.

MEGAN APONTE-PAYNE: I think you're right. I think a lot of areas with the Public Service haven't been exposed to this before and are for the first time during COVID. How do you think we can harness the lessons that we've learned from that, to take them forward?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Well indeed the Secretary of your Department, as the leader of the Public Service for having a Secretary retreat, that Phil will lead next week, in fact it's one of the issues we're going to talk about, is to what extent do we embrace this disrupted environment and presume it to be our permanent if not permanent then semi-permanent state. Not only embrace it as an ethos as it were or as an environment but embrace the organisational consequences that follow. Yes, we need to have Departments of State because you need to have accountability, you need to have budgets that are allocated, but increasingly we should be working in as much more flexible and fluid way.

Now we certainly do it within my department because I have the authority to move the resources around. We're increasingly doing it across the Home Affairs portfolio where myself as the Secretary, along with the agency heads have formed a portfolio board and we mix and match units all the time. This goes beyond IDC's and even Task Force. This is a very different way of working, which is akin to joint and coalition activities that you find in National Security practise.

You are right, a lot of the Public Service has not been exposed to it. Initially it's very bracing because it's very... People say, "But my boss is an EL1 or EL2, and I've got a good relationship with them," and that's great. No one is suggesting that that should be broken and, "I don't like uncertainty," to which the response is, "But the world is giving you uncertainty," so you can embrace that and just start to build it into your plans or you can resist it, but it's a false resistance because the world is going to win. The world wins at that struggle.

DAVID PEMBROKE: All right Megan, thank you for those questions, and to you Secretary, thank you for coming in today. I didn't mean to try to pension you off earlier in the conversation.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: You called me distinguished, so... (laughter)

DAVID PEMBROKE: But what's next? What's the next big challenge? Obviously you've had your hands on this for a while, what's the future look like for you?

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: The next challenge is the same answer as what I would have given you yesterday and the day before and Jaycob, who's here with me today can attest to this, it's as I walk out there'll be some WhatsApp group or some message group that I'm on and a Minister or a group of Ministers or the Prime Minister himself will say, "I need you to do this," and picking up the themes I just expanded upon, the answer will be, "Yep I've already thought of that. I've got the organisational team." It's like those... In my trade we should not call it a heist movie because we are not like that, but it's the ethos of an Oceans team, right?

DAVID PEMBROKE: All right.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: Now David, I won't suggest that you or I could be played by either Clooney or Pitt, but the idea is, and we're not into heists because we do law enforcement so we're on the other team, but the idea of mix and matching... and I'm very passionate about this in case you haven't picked it up-

DAVID PEMBROKE: Yeah, yeah. Got it.

MICHAEL PEZZULLO: So whether it's ethos that you get in those Oceans series or similar, you put the team together, you crack through on the task and then you leave enough capacity when it's become routine and industrialised and those other teams then move on. So you asked me what's next? It will be on my phone I suggest, when I walk out.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Indeed. Interesting. I might follow you. Could be an interesting movie that you're involved in. Thanks for coming on Work with Purpose and thank you for your service.

Now listen, before we finish today I would like to, on behalf of the programme and indeed if I might be a bit bold on the panellists today, that we send our best wishes and our thoughts and our prayers to everyone who's listening today from Victoria who is dealing with the impacts of this dreadful virus. For those of you who are in lockdown, we are with you in spirit. It's a difficult time, but we are thinking of you. Hang in there, it will pass, and know that everyone here in Canberra is thinking of you.

Work with Purpose is part of the GovComms Podcast Network, and if you are interested in discussions with experts from all over the world about the latest in Government communication and quite seriously, who is not? We have now over 230 episodes of that programme available for you to listen to, so I would commend it to you, and indeed, if you do see the promotion for this particular podcast, please share, review, pass it along because it does help us to get discovered. There was a massive response a couple of weeks ago to our conversation with Rebecca Skinner, and thanks to everyone at Services Australia who did such a great job in commenting and liking and passing it along because it was just really fantastic for us to do, and I'm sure that there will be great interest in the conversation today with the Secretary.

But listen, the big guns keep coming here. Gordon de Brouwer will be on with 'A National Perspective and we'll be talking to Sharyn O'Neill who is the Western Australian Public Sector Commissioner and State Recovery Controller. And coming up in the latter part of August we have Chris Jordan, the Commissioner of the Australian Tax Office. A very special episode with Dr Steven Kennedy, the Secretary of the Treasury. That will be something and I can guarantee you now, Drew Baker from IPAA, as I walked in today, gave me a little bit of a hint of some of the things that he's got planned and that will be something special.

Thanks again to IPAA ACT and to the Australian Public Service Commission for their ongoing support. This programme would not happen without the team here and the team back at the contentgroup office, so thanks to you all. The biggest thanks of all is to you the audience for coming back in such big and strong numbers. But for this week that's all that we have for now. We'll be back at the same time next week, but for the moment it's bye for now.