

TRANSCRIPT OF PODCAST

WORK WITH PURPOSE

REFLECTING ON AUSTRALIA'S RECONCILIATION JOURNEY #85

David Pembroke (Host)

CEO & Founder
contentgroup

BRENDAN MOYLE (Guest)

Executive Branch Manager
Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
ACT Government

5 June 2023

Enquiries should be directed to CAROLINE WALSH on 0413 139 427 or at caroline.walsh@act.ipaa.org.au

DAVID PEMBROKE: Hello and welcome to Work With Purpose, a podcast about the Australian public sector and how it serves the Australian community. My name is DAVID PEMBROKE. Thanks for joining me. As we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting today, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples 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 today is joining us from. Australia commemorated Reconciliation Week with the theme Be A Voice for Generations, encouraging everyone to have a voice for reconciliation in our everyday lives. While Australia strives for reconciliation and togetherness, there is the harsh reality of the lives of our First Nations people.

The Productivity Commission's most recent Closing the Gap Progress Report described the persistent inequalities in health, education, justice and employment. In 2022, the Australian Reconciliation Barometer found that 60% of First Nations people survey reported that they had experienced racial prejudice, which just highlights just how much more needs to be done and how urgent the need is for systemic change.

Regardless of the outcome of the Australian Government's upcoming Voice to Parliament Referendum, it's essential we continue the discussion about how best to tackle these inequalities and discrimination so we create a society we can all be proud of and a society where all Australians thrive.

Today on Work with Purpose, we discuss practical ways to contribute to reconciliation with a leader in the field of First Nations Policy and Affairs. BRENDAN MOYLE is a Kamilaroi Gamilaraay man with connections to the land and communities of Northwest New South Wales. But he's lived and worked in communities across other parts of New South Wales and the ACT.

He is the Executive Branch Manager of the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs in the ACT Government and the former CEO of the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council and also a former member of the Federal APS SES at the National Indigenous Australians Agency and also at DSS. BRENDAN MOYLE, welcome to Work With Purpose.

BRENDAN MOYLE: [Inaudible]. In my language, that's hello everybody. If I can also echo and pass on and acknowledge country as well. Both the Ngunnawal people here in the ACT, but also all families that have ancestral connections here for the country that we now know as the ACT. We stand on ancient lands. But if I can pay my respects to the traditional owners and ancestral connections to people across this country.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Just before we jump into it, this acknowledgement of country, we do it every time at the beginning of Work With Purpose, meaningfully, thoughtfully, deliberately. Why is it so important that we do that, that we start a lot of our engagement by this acknowledgement of country?

BRENDAN MOYLE: For me, it's a modern interpretation or an adaptation of an ancient protocol. In old days, pre-colonisation, when people came onto someone's country, you either came in peace, which you were welcome to country, or you came in during times of conflict and war.

An acknowledgement of country is a modern interpretation. When you actually go onto someone else's traditional country, you're paying respects to their ancestors. For us as Aboriginal people, we are connected beyond just the transactional connection of land ownership that we see nowadays. But it is about that ancestral connection. It's about the genes from our ancestors that run through the land, through the country, but it's also about the birthing of our creation stories. People quite often hear that we talk about that we don't own the land, we are custodians and that we are one. For me, that acknowledgement of country is critical for acknowledging that ancient spirituality and that ancient connection that now spans back as has been evidenced, well over 65,000 years as the world's oldest living cultures.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Do you think that people understand that well enough, that explanation that you just gave? That it is so important that it be recognised and how meaningful is it to our First Nations people that they hear the acknowledgement of country?

BRENDAN MOYLE: That's a great question, for me and with my experience across government and in a variety of community roles over the last 25/30 years, look, I think it's critically important as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, when you hear it, you feel a sense of pride and connection that there is something genuine there.

However though, you hit the nail on the head there. It has to be a genuine commitment to actually acknowledging country. It can't just be something that has no emotion, has no meaning, can't just be a script that's read so that you can tick a box and get on with it. It is about that broader acknowledgement.

One of the things when I was the CEO of Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, I was quite often saying across New South Wales and particularly the New South Wales Parliament, that when you go to New Zealand, Maori culture is embedded in the whole, what are called the social DNA of New Zealand.

Yet Maori culture goes back on the islands of New Zealand for a couple of thousand years. Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultures actually goes back well over 60,000-65,000 years. Our connections here with country are the longest recorded across the world. I find it interesting that Australians quite often travel to go and experience other cultures. But for me it's about how they take that same passion and embed that within, I guess their behavioural patterns and what they actually do. Actions speak louder than words. Showing that passion through an acknowledgement of country, a genuine commitment, it means a lot to us as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

DAVID PEMBROKE: So, that moves us pretty nicely into the opening question really. We had Reconciliation Week, it's now behind us. There are all sorts of events and commemoration, celebrations, acknowledgements of the importance of Australia's First Nations people. But in your opinion, where is Australia on its reconciliation journey?

BRENDAN MOYLE: I probably go across two different prongs. One, I have to acknowledge the great work that's happening. There is a stronger national conversation about reconciliation. But two and I pay my respects to Uncle Sol Belliar.

Uncle Sol passed a number of years ago, but he was one of my elders and I learned a lot from him.

He introduced Paul Keating at the Redfern Park speech in 1992 and before his death, he actually wrote an article in the Sydney Morning Herald that said, "Question The Validity of Reconciliation of the Reconciliation Movement."

I think that the statistics you identified that about the level of its disparity that a lot of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still face are typical of the fact that reconciliation hasn't really worked. We have commitments and it's fantastic seeing the commitments. I don't see anything as good or bad. It's an evolution.

But we need to move beyond just the structural elements in terms of reconciliation action plans, to actually move to something that's much more tangible. Reconciliation starts with people getting to know people as people. It starts with being able to share the stories with people. Sometimes, reconciliation's founded in the small things. But when we're still, in this day and age having conversations about systemic racism, the concerns about discrimination that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still face, even though we are seeing a monumental shift over the last 10/15 years has reconciliation actually worked to deliver outcomes on those.

We've had a history of government commitments and governments themselves, by and large, are committed to try and actually do something but without genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people both internally and externally to our systems, our processes, that never gets achieved. People often question for me about reconciliation, particularly in terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and I remember saying to people saying, "Okay, well why do you want Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff?"

They look at me and say, "diversity." I say, "Is diversity a statistic or is it actually diversity of thinking that you want?" Because if you want to really reconcile and make a difference to the lives of some of our most vulnerable people, then you need to be able to reform and reshape our policies and programs to be able to deliver on that. And sometimes the best people that have insight into that, are the people that come from those communities. The challenge for me is when I talk about reconciliation, is how much do we truly value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, peoples and ways of being and seeing things.

DAVID PEMBROKE: But, you would seem to recognise in the earlier part of your answer that there is that recognition in this national conversation.

BRENDAN MOYLE: Absolutely.

DAVID PEMBROKE: But it's that gap, isn't it, between conversation and behaviour?

BRENDAN MOYLE: Correct.

DAVID PEMBROKE: So, how then do people take practical steps? How can they be educated to be able to move from this intention to this action that is actually going to start to address some of these hideous inequalities?

BRENDAN MOYLE: For me, look, I don't think any nation actually does it extremely well. It's an impact of colonisation. The reality is for us as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we make up about 3% of the population. So, we don't have the strength in terms of the voting constituent base. We are absolutely the minority. Where things can change though, is through our allies. When the marches first started, and I've been part of the... I was part of the Land Rights Movement for almost 25 years in New South Wales.

I remember listening to my elders. The strength of the Aboriginal warriors that were part of that, that were standing up to fight the inequalities that started the Aboriginal Legal Service, the first Aboriginal Medical Service, the first Aboriginal Housing Providers, they all started in Redfern and they started from significant adversity but it wasn't Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people standing alone.

When you look at the Freedom Rides, at Charlie Perkins, it took the uni students, he was the only Aboriginal person on that bus. That bus was full of non-Indigenous people who were our allies. But what they did was they actually came on the journey with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

They saw it through our eyes. That's what is fundamentally needed. The challenge for us is that we've got the structural elements in terms of closing the gap and here in ACT, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan. I have to admit, I mean in all my experience across the Federal Government, New South Wales Government for that and the ACT Government, now, I don't think I've met anyone that is ill-intentioned towards us.

The challenge is how do we actually remove our way of being and doing to see it through that cultural relativistic lens? How do we actually embrace diversity? Not just diversity in gender, or age, or cultural dynamics, but it's fundamentally diversity in thought. It's that diversity of lived experience that brings that to the forefront.

One of the things I quite often say to people as well is that things change when you value it. When you go to New Zealand, you go to Wellington, you go to at Auckland, Maori culture is embedded everywhere you go. We are starting to see a surge of growth of that now in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, which is fantastic. But it's one step.

DAVID PEMBROKE: But if it's governments that you recognise are getting it and are trying, but what about citizens? What about people?

BRENDAN MOYLE: Citizens? Industry? So, for me, the reason I raise government is that government is an institution, but who occupies the institution? One of my elders many, many years ago, he passed away. He was on the National Aboriginal Conference at which predated ATSIC. I remember him telling me this story, that this young Maori guy went out trying and changed the world and fought and tried to do things and got some really good things done, did some really interesting things, but didn't see the change. So he came back to Australia and thought, "You know what? I'm going to try and change Australia. I'm going to focus on the whole of Australia."

Got a little bit more traction, but still the inequality was still there. Steadily so, he came back and said, "You know what? I'm going to look after New South Wales. I'm going to focus now predominantly on New South Wales." And again, each time he came down a level, there was more traction.

Finally, he said, "You know what? I need to focus on my hometown. I need to focus on my own backyard." One of the things I often say to people recounting that story is that our sphere of influence as individuals, we may work in institutions, we may work in businesses, we may work in large corporate entities, we may work in government, but it's the values that we actually apply.

If we truly value and recognise the value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and peoples, then by nature everywhere we go, we have those conversations. When you walk into a shop, if you hear someone actually being disparaging, you challenge that. It doesn't have to be an Aboriginal person that challenges that. For me, it's those, it's the little relationships spending time to get to know Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Not just as, "Oh, you're an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person." But as a person, as a human being, first, look at the journey that their families have come through. Look at what the connection actually means.

One of the things I keep advocating when I was on the Central Coast, I was quite successful with it in terms of our creation story for Kamilaroi, Gamilaraay, Wiradjuri, Darkinjung and I would say most of New South Wales actually started at the back of the Central Coast.

The creation story of Baiame, the Light-giver, the All Father, came down from the stars, the Mirrabooka. He landed and actually brought down the sky spirits. He created the rivers, he created the mountains, he created the forest, the bush. Then he turned the sky spirits into the animals, which became our totems, our food sources. And then he created people.

He lived amongst the people. He gave us law, he gave us language, he gave us kinship, the rules by which we live. Then when he departed, he actually departed from Mount Yengo. He kicked off and he pushed off from there, which is why Mount Yengo has a flat top. He went back to the Mirrabooka, back to the stars. Now for us, I used to share that story particularly across Sydney, within the New South Wales Parliament with a lot of the Parliamentarians. I said, that is one of the world's oldest creation stories.

It's time immemorial. I could take them out to engravings of Baiame that were 20 or 30,000 years old, but I could only do that if people truly valued it. As I used to say to people, imagine, people want to see Australia, they want to understand Australia.

People want to come to Australia to embrace the world's oldest living cultures. But we don't showcase it. The only people who have the right to showcase it are those of us from it. But that doesn't mean we can't work in partnership. For me, I keep coming back to the word value. If we truly value it and we realise that it can be something that not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be proud of, but something like in New Zealand.

You see, a lot of the Pākehā actually embrace Maori culture. They recognise where their place is within working as partners and allies to those cultures or to that culture. But they embrace it. I think for me, when we talk about reconciliation, that's what it is. It's about embracing the individual. It's getting to know those individual stories, getting to know, going out and spending time with traditional custodians here in the ACT, there are many traditional custodians that have cultural tours.

There's language groups, there's a whole range of things, revitalising the

ancient cultures of this land. So, the people can easily take some time out and spend a half a day out and go and visit it, to embrace it, to understand it, understand what the stories, and the signs, and some of the actual land management techniques actually were that go back thousands of years and the land that we walked on today.

DAVID PEMBROKE: But the conversation again, is valuable to a point. But it's ultimately compassion, isn't it? There's that recognition, but there's also that movement to action and you're outlining some pretty simple steps that people can take to actually make a contribution.

BRENDAN MOYLE: Absolutely. Absolutely. Look, for me, it's the simple steps that mean the most. I don't mean to be disparaging at any individual or any individual entity, but when you look at Juukan Gorge, what happened with Juukan Gorge, one of the world's oldest cave art paintings?

Again, it's something that is of such historical significance, not just for Australia, but for the world, was destroyed by an organisation that had the highest tier of Reconciliation Action Plan. Words and documents do mean a lot, but they can easily be cast aside. Actions are what's truly valuable. And this is where I think within our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, that's what people wait to see because over the years, over the hundreds of years since colonisation, there's been promises, there's been commitments and there's been failures, there's been ongoing failures.

I think the value of particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Public Servants, those of us that are connected with community, is that we can help to bridge that gap. We can start to reset that relationship. And ultimately, the principle of reconciliation isn't just about bringing people together, but it's about the benefit of all people and of what we now call Australia. By working together, we can celebrate so much. But it needs to go beyond just tasks and performance indicators. It needs to go to the heart and soul of what reconciliation actually is.

DAVID PEMBROKE: As a leader in the First Nations community, how do you react when you see these sorts of statistics that were published in the Reconciliation Barometer about that discrimination? And then we see something like the incident with Stan Grant on the ABC, where he was pilloried, and attacked, and with vile discriminatory abuse, really, that ended him in a position where he had to step back and step out. Where does that come from and how do we address that? How do we get rid of that so that it's no longer a part of Australian society?

BRENDAN MOYLE: So I might just say, actually it's funny, I don't see myself as a leader in our communities. I do what I do. My grandmother and my elders brought me up to do, to be part of what... To bring whatever I can to be able to support and better our people in our communities. Culturally, we never had a single person. So culturally, we always had... We operated as a collective. And that's the way I've been brought up.

But for me, as someone that's got extensive experience across Aboriginal community control organisations, movements and government, look, it didn't surprise me. Some of the worst discrimination that I have actually faced, to be honest with you was actually in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs environments when I was in the Commonwealth.

It's funny, when I look at the APS Census results going back 15/20 years ago, those same things were being reported. And we tweak around the edges and I say, we collectively as bureaucrats and our society, we tweak around the edges because we don't want to offend anyone. We don't want to offend those people who are actually offending the actual victims. And this is part of the reason why we see a trend where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people leave major corporations, they leave government.

Because finally it becomes overwhelming. People often frame it, I don't think a lot of it is necessarily intentional, but it's unconscious bias. That doesn't mean it's not discrimination, it's not racism. And again, it comes down to a value set. There's a frame of reference called ethnocentrism. And ethnocentrism is a human trait where we judge every situation, we judge every interaction naturally by our own cultural dynamics and our values that we've been instilled in. When we define culture, we actually frame our reference around it.

Now, unfortunately, within Australia, the paradigm of the cultural dynamic has been to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through a negative lens. And subconsciously that still plays out. And this has been part of the challenge. Uncle Tom Calma, years ago spoke about unconscious bias being one of the biggest challenges we've got. But the other problem is too though, that because as we've become more **ofay** with calling out racism, those people who harbour those beliefs become much more covert in terms of how they deal with it. And the problem for us is that we don't necessarily put the support frameworks around to be able to support the people who are experiencing it, whether it be physical. When I was young, the reason I wear glasses was because I was bashed.

Now, I'm glad that that doesn't happen now at the same extent. But racism still happens on a daily basis. I remember years ago when I first... Actually, not when I first moved to Canberra, but after I moved to Canberra and I was the Deputy Chair of the Steering [Inaudible] Committee for the Lateral Housing Agreement of the ACT. So I was working with a ACT Ministers and Federal Ministers as a community representative to try and get better housing solutions. My real estate agent came in and did an inspection on the place I was renting one day and said, "This is a really nice place, given that Aboriginals live here. They look after it."

Didn't see anything wrong with that, but this is what we encounter day by day by day. Unfortunately, racism and discrimination is everywhere. But I come back to that word value. If Stan Grant and his views were truly valued, not just in the words of the organisation or the Senior Executives within the ABC, that behaviour never would've happened.

If he was truly valued for the diversity of his own thinking and experience that he was bringing, his colleagues or the people perpetrating that would've the benefits to their organisation, to the product that they're marketing. But they didn't. They might smile and say, "Yeah, we'll turn up at an event and we'll walk through the smoke and cleanse ourselves." But their behaviours, their actions speak volumes to the counter of that.

DAVID PEMBROKE: So are you confident, or would you be confident that if this value piece was better understood, if it was appreciated, if it was acted upon that you would start to address the Closing the Gap Report?

BRENDAN MOYLE: Absolutely.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Underlying failures at the moment, really where we see that, children commencing school out of home care, adult imprisonment, suicide, sea, country, subject to rights and interests. We would see improvements if the value was there?

BRENDAN MOYLE: Absolutely. And that's not to say that not all people value. Some of the most amazing people that I have met throughout my career have been non-Indigenous allies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We've got some amazing Ministers, amazing Public Servants, amazing corporate leaders. As the CEO of Darkinjung. I was given the opportunity, I wasn't bound by the APS values. I could do what I wanted within a relatively hardcore movement. What I got to see though was particularly from that side of things, was the ability to be able to forge relationships. We have genuine allies out there with the challenges. How do we actually translate that? How do we start to actually make it flow through? So it's something everyone can be proud of.

And even in the 18 months that I was up on the Central Coast in New South Wales, we did a lot of work around cultural authority and integrity. And what we saw was that dynamic shift, even in that 18 months where business people didn't see us as a threat, they saw us as an important ally. But that takes leadership within the non-Indigenous community and the Aboriginal community to do that. It takes that real commitment in terms of being able to sit down and have a conversation.

I mean, I look at everything as... Look for me, yes, I see the negatives. I also see many of the positives as well. And we're at a point in time in our lives or in Australian life that we're at least having conversations we never had before. Unfortunately, as we see with some of the stuff going on around The Voice debate, there is hysteria still, actually racially driven hysteria that's still out there. It's funny, when we look at, you mentioned land and sea rights. Land rights is a typical example.

Everyone wants to support Aboriginal people actually develop... Have land and develop land as long as it's not next to them. That's what we encountered on the Central Coast. There was a shortage of 20,000 residential dwellings there. We were the biggest landowners and I negotiated significant, probably the biggest land developments for the Central Coast. Responding of that. I had the New South Wales parliament absolutely behind me, the New South Wales government. But there were still people who would go, "Oh, that's an Aboriginal development. We don't want them next to us."

The irony was we weren't going to be actually keeping a lot of it for our people. We were selling it to everyone. The amount of times I'd hear, "Oh, look. We're not against you. Please, we want you to develop, but just not next to us."

These are the attitudes. These are the stereotypes that we still see in society. I had emails sent to me because we didn't fix a wharf that we didn't actually own yet, but if we didn't fix a wharf, they were going to get it a whole community to vote no to The Voice and people would put that in writing. So we still see under the current of smiles within society, there are still people that hold those beliefs. And this is the challenge I want to cast out to everyone listening today, is how you use your sphere of influence to challenge those behaviours, how you use your sphere of influence to get to know people as people but also to call out and have the courage, not in an adversarial way, you catch more bees with honey than you do vinegar.

But to be able to challenge those behaviours. We are all leaders in our own right. We are all leaders. When we actually grow up, the first people we look at as our leaders are our immediate family, our older brothers and sisters, our parents, our grandparents, our extended family.

We all have a sphere of influence in our professional realm, no matter how senior or junior we actually are. We have the power to be able to shape and influence people for the better. When I come back to, for me, the values that I always try to live by that were instilled upon me by my elders that are our cultural values are respect, humility, integrity and honesty.

The cultural law is an L-O-R-E that's applied over that in terms of ceremony, belief systems, all of those things are underpinned by those. But those aren't just our beliefs. Those are the values and beliefs that can underpin an effective, functioning, socially inclusive and prosperous society.

DAVID PEMBROKE: In your role at the ACT Government at the moment, what have you been able to do to encourage that sort of behaviour, encourage that sort of responsibility inside the ACT community and inside the ACT Government itself? What sort of things are working for you at the moment in terms of building that behavioural change?

BRENDAN MOYLE: For me, it's about bringing, I guess my own personal values and drive as a Senior Officer, Senior Executive Officer within that. Can I say though, and it's actually so much easier when you've got great allies around you.

That's one of the things that I am quite blessed and fortunate about within the ACT Public Service and within the ACT Government, we are lucky, we probably have one of the more progressive executive governments. People actually want to do the right thing. They value social justice. That's always a starting point. People want genuine partnership. Many of our...

Particularly Senior Executive that I've had the fortune of working with since being here, truly believe and they see the value and it comes back down that value conversation again, that's not saying in other jurisdictions, that's not possible.

I've seen it in other jurisdictions. I've also seen the counter where people try to find a process or an excuse to say no to things rather than saying, "Actually, how do we make this work because this could be a great thing."

And that's one of the things that really appealed to me with the ACT Government. The people that I'm working with, the people I'm working for and the community that I'm serving generally want things to change and they've got a higher threshold and appetite for change.

We are small, where it means we've got to be really agile. We don't have necessarily the financial resources of the Federal Government or the New South Wales Government. That's a challenge, but it's also an opportunity because it breeds and it forces innovation. To be honest with you, that's one of the things that I feel really blessed here in the ACT community, that the people want to actually change things and they're prepared to actually stand up a little bit more.

DAVID PEMBROKE: The statistics that I've quoted are pretty clear, that the disadvantage is real. It's current. It's perhaps improving. It's still not where it needs to be. But if I could ask you to go into the future, perhaps go to the future of five years time, could you describe what you'd like to see achieved by then? And

indeed a call-out to everyone who's listening on the podcast today as to what they could do to contribute to that reality?

Because again, what I take from this is that time is important in all of this. But so is action and so is compassion and so is doing, not just talking. The national conversation is important, the symbolism is important, but ultimately it's going to be action that people take. But five years time, what does it look like?

BRENDAN MOYLE: Can I just start? It's a really great question. Many of my elders that I've learned from over the years get frustrated and angry and people see angry Aboriginal people. But we come into, and I say, we collectively as the rest of society, even though I'm part of that group, people look at it collectively and go, "Oh, but there's an angry Aboriginal person." They don't realise that those people have spent the whole lifetimes fighting for sometimes what becomes quite minimal change.

They see their kids and their grandkids suffering with the same issues that they were standing up against at 50, 60, 70 years ago. Five years is a drop in the ocean. What I would like to see is that we actually focus and understand what the real needs are. I'm all for the prosperity conversation, the fact we can't use deficit language, but we can't hide from it either.

Here in the ACT, we have the most affluent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Australia. We have that 9,000 people under the Census living here in the ACT. There is a significant number working in the Public Service on higher median salaries than anywhere else for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. But we still have some of the worst indicators in terms of incarceration, children out of home care, housing issues and everything else. What that tells me is that we quite often set our policy settings based on the people who are actually doing the best rather than those who actually need the help the most.

For me, my experience and I speak as a proponent of land rights in New South Wales as the former CEO of one of the biggest land councils as in New South Wales, as the Former Chair of an Aboriginal Housing Provider and the Former Chair of the Aboriginal Legal Service. We need to focus on those that are most vulnerable.

We need to have an appetite for change. Things won't change overnight, but it's like that old hair shampoo ad where they flick around. Won't happen overnight, but it will happen. To build a house, you need the right foundations. The right foundations are interrogating. And rather than tweaking around the edges on things, actually if things aren't working, having the appetite and the courage to stand there and say, "Well, let's think about what the problem definition is and how we reset the policy and program agenda around that."

Part of the reason why I came back here to the ACT and to work with the ACT Government is that we have an Executive Government that has that appetite. We have senior leaders within where I'm working that have that appetite. They want to not just because they want to change things, not just because they've got to, but because they genuinely feel.

That is what's fundamentally... That's why I keep coming back to it's the value. If we truly value culture, if we truly value and recognise that we need to change things, we have an appetite to change. People look at me and say, "But the policy says..." Policies can change. You've just got to develop a business case.

Or people will say, "Oh, but the legislation says well..." Legislation can change. Again, you've got to go through a little bit more of a process. The constitution can change if people value it. That's the thing, if people value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultures, the history, if they value the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be front and centre of what the change actually is and not from a deficit perspective, but from a prosperity perspective, then things change.

DAVID PEMBROKE: You're clearly very determined. Are you optimistic?

BRENDAN MOYLE: I am optimistic because I see that things can change with the right people, with the right people, having the right conversations. Sometimes that means our leaders. Sometimes that means people just having a conversation around a kitchen table. Everything can change.

But we need to touch people's hearts as well as their minds. For me, that's been my approach in terms of how I work. It's funny, I never expected to come back to government. I was having a ball in land rights as a movement that I truly love. Land rights isn't about land, and title, and deed, it's about economic sovereignty, it's about self-determination, it's about cultural sovereignty. It's about identity.

It was about our human rights. When the Tent Embassy started, it wasn't just about land, it was about our recognition as people. And so for me, I always try to understand what is the heart and soul of where things came from. If we can share that story and bring people along on that journey with us, then suddenly our voices become magnified and change becomes evident.

Like I said, we're 3% of the population. We can't change the legislation, we can't change the outcomes of voting. We can't do those things. But if we work together as an inclusive society that values truly values and appreciates and loves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, then anything's possible.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Well, Brendan, good luck to you and indeed, good luck to everyone listening, because nothing's going to change unless it changes in the individual, the individual person, and the action. I think the point around compassion is so important because that's what drives change. Where people accept, recognise, acknowledge and indeed love, but then do something. And I think that's a very strong call that you've made today is, to everyone listening is really to take action, is to think about it, to embrace it, to engage.

Perhaps through The Voice Referendum Campaign, there will be an opportunity, not only conversation, but action as we move forward. Thanks very much for joining us on Work With Purpose today. To you, the audience, thank you for turning up once again to listen to one of these important Australian public sector conversations. Indeed, government does have a leadership role, as do all Public Servants have a leadership role in the work that they do.

Please take on the words of Brendan and be inspired to take that action, but also we inspire you also to continue to listen to Work With Purpose on these public sector conversations. Indeed, you can follow the latest about Work with Purpose on [contentgroup](#) and also at [IPAA ACT](#) on LinkedIn.

If you've got a question or anything you'd like to know or indeed suggest,

around some of these conversations, please an email to events@act.ipa.org.au. Work with Purpose is produced in collaboration between ContentGroup and the Institute of Public Administration of Australia, ACT, with the kind support of the Australian Public Service Commission.

Please, if you'd like to listen to any of past episodes, please do so. We're on Spotify, Apple Podcast, Stitcher, and more. And indeed a rating or a review would be gratefully accepted because what that does is help the program to be found. We'll be back at the same time in a fortnight. My name is DAVID PEMBROKE and it's bye for now.