

Connecting Us is a newsletter sponsored by the COO Committee for all APS staff, sharing stories of your successes and highlighting useful resources.

Message from the Chair

Katherine

Katherine Jones PSM is the Chair of the Chief Operating Officers Committee, and Deputy Secretary Business Enabling Services at the Department of Finance.

The APS continues with its focus on the health and economic response to COVID-19. We have supported the delivery of an unprecedented range of measures while operating in new and innovative ways. The way we perform some of our roles may never be the same, as we have embraced new ways of collaborating and working to achieve shared outcomes.

The COO Committee has focussed on considering how we can leverage and embed some of the new ways of working into the future APS operating model. There is a great opportunity for the service as a whole, as well as individual departments and agencies, to maintain the positive aspects of working in our current environment. That doesn't mean we'll never meet in person again! But it does reflect that we have proven to ourselves that we can operate in different ways, using technology and collaboration platforms, to deliver our work. The Committee will continue to consider how we can support the service as a whole to embrace new ways of working.

Of course the coming weeks will see a lot of attention in the Committee on the transition to the usual workplace, consistent with the Roadmap to a COVIDSafe Australia and the APSC guidance on Preparing for a COVID-safe transition for APS workplaces. So we'll need to continue to adapt and deliver – a challenge that we have risen to over recent months and will continue to do so in the future.

ATO staff answer the call

Tasked with delivering some of the government's key COVID-19 response measures, including JobKeeper, it's been all hands-on deck at the ATO to pivot its operations and get Australians the support they need.

'Being adaptive and flexible is really important right now,' said ATO Chief Operating Officer Jacqui Curtis. 'We're so proud of our staff, who have shown real client-focus and commitment by agreeing to take up new roles.'

Around 3,800 ATO staff have changed roles to support implementation of JobKeeper and early release of super, and another 2,000 are bolstering frontline support. While it presents a challenge, those staff who have made a move understand the importance of pitching in. As ATO Contact Centre Officer Georgia Caesar puts it, 'we are providing the essential support all Australians need right now.'

This shift in priorities has resulted in a significant change for many staff, but by using innovative tools and platforms the ATO is making sure staff stay connected as one agency and focused on their core purpose. For example, the ATO's creative and light-hearted *Keeping connected* campaign (including cartoons like the one pictured) boosts staff morale and reminds them of the real impact their work has on the lives of Australians.



APS redeployment: Grads' perspective

Many 2020 Graduates were weeks into their first rotation when COVID-19 forced APS-wide changes. They faced not working from home, but moving agencies altogether!

Since moving from the National Indigenous Australians Agency, Madeleine Antrum and Connor Deegan have been helping Australians in need by processing JobSeeker claims. While initially uncertain about redeployment to Services Australia, it has been a positive experience for both. 'It's a rare opportunity to see how different departments and agencies work, and to contribute to the COVID-19 response,' Madeleine said.

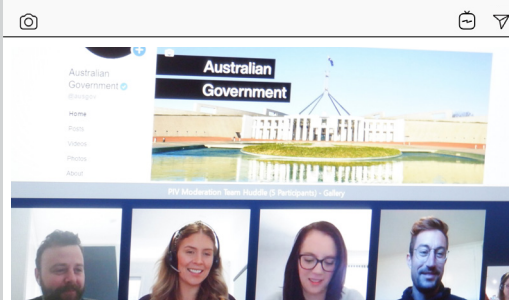
For Connor, speaking directly with customers, putting a voice to a claim has been valuable. 'You can tell the person really needs the money, is keen to get it and we are able to help get it to them,' he said.

Holly White and Sebastian Ward, two Defence graduates, were also redeployed to Services Australia. 'It has been an



APS Socials

#Workwithpurpose



From managing international visits and running after visiting Heads of State, to now moderating the @AusGov social media channels - PM&C's international visits team has embraced #APSMobility



Scientists from the Australian Antarctic Division turned spare laboratory chemicals into hand sanitiser for Tasmanians in need #WorkWithPurpose

exciting and challenging time to start my career during this pandemic. It has given me an incredible opportunity to experience first-hand how APS staff directly support the Australian community,' said Holly.

Sebastian said, 'I am proud of the work we have been doing in Services Australia and just knowing that we are helping Australians in need is keeping me energised.'

Five minutes with Peter Harris –

CEO, National COVID-19 Coordination Commission



These are ‘not normal times’ according to Peter Harris, CEO of the new National COVID-19 Coordination Commission (NCCC). And they warrant alternative ways to bring together Australians with the right experience to make sure Australia’s COVID-19 response is ‘being informed by quick, accurate, reliable and succinct advice’.

In his role as CEO, this includes using Peter’s many years of problem solving experience in the public and private sector, including heading up the Victorian Government’s crisis response to 2009 Black Saturday.

So what is the NCCC’s goal? To facilitate the fastest recovery possible of lives and livelihoods, by providing a channel for business, industry and not-for-profits to raise issues and

connect to Government, and for businesses to connect with each other. Drawing on their extensive industry experience, the Chair and Commissioners each work closely with an industry sector.

Dealing with urgent issues, such as PPE supply, was the NCCC’s initial focus. Now the focus is on restarting the economy, getting people back to work – not just for people’s economic outcomes but for themselves – and supporting businesses to provide COVID-safe environments for workers and customers.

Stay up to date with the NCCC at pmc.gov.au/nccc.

Back to the future? Managing our transition out of crisis and to the ‘next normal’

We’re asking people across the APS about their experience working through COVID-19, including how restrictions, social distancing, operating away from their normal place of work and transitioning back are affecting them.



Elly’s home work setup

Elly, a policy officer in the Department of Education, Skills and Employment in Canberra told us:

‘Just as I was nervous about working from home full-time, I find myself a bit apprehensive about returning to the office (particularly heading into Canberra winter)! Luckily our team has kept up regular video chats, virtual morning teas and Friday afternoon trivia to keep us feeling connected. A really important thing I will take away from this experience is there is more than one way to ‘go to work’ (and some of these ways can involve you staying in your trackie dacks all day).’



The **COVIDSafe** app has become the fastest app in Australia to reach five million downloads. APS staff and their families are encouraged to download the app. It is an important part of the solution to returning life to normal.

Making good decisions in a time of overload

Catch up on the latest in the IPAA ACT podcast series, [Work with Purpose](#). Hear stories and insights from Frances Adamson, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Cheryl-Anne Moy, Chief Operating Officer at the Department of Home Affairs.

Useful Links and Resources

- [APSC Circular 2020/5: Preparing for a COVID-safe transition to APS workplaces](#)
- [APS Online Learning Catalogue](#)
- [Government’s May 2020 economic statement: the economic impact of the crisis](#)

All important information for APS staff is available from the [APSC COVID-19 portal](#).

We want to hear from you!

We’d love to share your stories in upcoming editions. If you have a story about how your department or agency is adapting where and how you work, please get in touch.

Email us at: CooCommittee@pmc.gov.au