

## INTRODUCING CONNECTING US

Mere weeks ago, most of us were working together in our offices or on-site. Thanks to a massive APS-wide effort, most of us are now working remotely or supporting Australians in call centres or other places at the forefront of our response to COVID-19.

The Chief Operating Officers Committee includes the COOs from all departments and major agencies. Established by the Secretaries Board, it first met in February with a remit to take on, for the first time, an enterprise-wide approach to APS operations and management. The Committee quickly focussed on managing whole-of-APS operations relating to COVID-19, including planning ahead beyond the immediate crisis. As we adapt and arrive at our new normal, the need for the APS to connect, collaborate and communicate is more important – and challenging – than ever.

The APS is rising to the challenges of this crisis every day. *Connecting Us* is a newsletter from the COO Committee to all APS staff to recognise the work you are doing to support Australians in these extraordinary times, share your successes and provide useful resources.

## WELCOME TO OUR FIRST EDITION!

Welcome to the first edition of *Connecting Us*! Operating on the 'one APS' principle, the COO Committee looks forward to sharing the progress and outcomes of our work with all APS staff.

The APS is at the frontline of implementing the Government's response to COVID-19 and I am proud to work with this dedicated group of people.

Our role is to provide Government-wide coordination, progress business continuity planning and pivot the APS to provide the support communities and businesses most need now, at the same time supporting and caring for our workforce across the APS as we respond to this great challenge.

I hope to share stories of the important work we are all doing in upcoming editions.

*Katherine*

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

## COMMUNITY THANKS CENTRELINK STAFF



*Message written on footpath outside the Yarra Service Centre*

Services Australia has been at the forefront of the Federal Government's COVID-19 response providing Australians with the services they need when they need them.

When the Yarra Service Centre in the inner city of Melbourne opened on Friday 27 March, the team was expecting a busy day. They were certainly not expecting to be greeted by a positive affirmation that still has the team and their customers smiling.

It came in the form of a rainbow chalk message on the centre's doorstep that said 'Thank you Centrelink staff we appreciate your work' next to a flower and a heart.

With the team drained after a demanding week, the message was the breath of fresh air, encouragement and recognition it needed. It wasn't only the staff that appreciated the sentiment, with customers stopping and smiling at the colourful welcome that has greeted them ever since.

A team member typed a note thanking the writer. "...Thank you for your beautiful act of kindness, we are so touched and appreciative, and we have shared your thoughtfulness with our colleagues across Australia... We are all in this together, stay safe and let's keep caring for each other..."

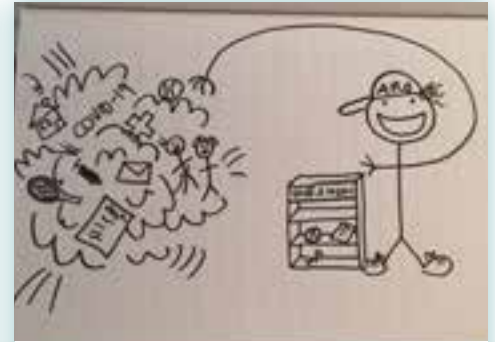
The note has been placed on the centre's door, in the hope that the writer will learn of the big impact their small gesture had on the team at the Yarra Service Centre.



📍 Another sign of public support, this time outside the Townsville Centrelink Service Centre #community



👍 Working and teaching at my makeshift stand up desk – Dani, Dept of Health #WorkingFromHome



Collect the innovations happening by necessity and store them safely! – Myf, APS Reform Office #NewNormal

## REDEPLOYED APS STAFF SUPPORTING AUSTRALIANS IN NEED

Following his visit to the newly opened Services Australia call centre in Tuggeranong, ACT, the Australian Public Service Commissioner, Peter Woolcott AO, said that without the commitment of dedicated staff, the APS would not be able to serve Australians effectively.

Thousands of ongoing and casual APS staff are putting their hand up to support critical government functions. This has shown a great sense of mission from APS staff.

“Many APS staff are acting with extreme flexibility, putting their own needs aside to do everything they can to help the Australian community. This selflessness is something that is ingrained in the culture of the APS, and something I admire and am grateful for in our workforce,” Mr Woolcott said.

Rema Grennan from Service Australia’s Caroline Chisholm Centre in Greenway, ACT believes the change now underway has the potential to change the APS forever.

“The first time someone takes a call we stand behind and cheer for them. They are creating relationships across agencies and departments that will benefit them throughout their careers.” Ms Grennan added.

Learn more about the [APS Workforce Management Taskforce](#) on the APSC website.



Staff redeployed from across the APS now at work in a new Canberra call centre

## 🎙️ TEN YEARS IN TEN DAYS?

*Listen to the new podcast from IPAA ACT ‘Work with Purpose’ featuring Australian Public Service Commissioner Peter Woolcott AO and Katherine Jones PSM.*

## USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

- 🔗 [Open letter to the APS from PM&C Secretary Phil Gaetjens and the APS Commission Peter Woolcott AO](#)
- 🔗 [Looking after your mental health](#)
- 🔗 [Circular 2020/3: COVID-19 – Remote working and evolving work arrangements](#)

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

### We want to hear from you!

How is your team working together while staying apart? What new ways of working are working best for you? And how are you staying in touch and supporting each other? We’d love to share your stories in upcoming editions.

✉ Email us at: [CooCommittee@pmc.gov.au](mailto:CooCommittee@pmc.gov.au)