

SES Integrity Masterclass - August



The SES Integrity Masterclass is aimed at providing SES leaders with access to current thinking and practical applications towards embedding pro-integrity culture across the APS. The content addresses the importance of integrity in the workplace by examining current, real-world issues through a practitioner-led approach.

Developed by the APS Academy in partnership with key APS integrity agencies and academic partners, it has been recognised in the “Louder than Words: An APS Action plan” as an “excellent integrity product” with the recommendation for “Secretaries to support all SES to undertake” this course.

Successful completion of this course involves both prework (available online at a time that suits you) and attendance at an interactive facilitated workshop.

This short video will explain the concept of Flipped learning (<https://vimeo.com/1027166737/b3888dc38a>) and the reason why prework completion is vital to your workshop experience.

Course details include:

- **Pework part 1:** Viewing a “Championing an Integrity Culture” panel discussion with APS Commissioner Dr Gordon de Brouwer, and other senior APS Leaders (50 minutes self-paced).
- **Pework part 2:** Reviewing and completing self-reflection activities in a “Strengthening your workplace integrity” digital handbook (Allow 120 mins self-paced to complete mandatory components).

- **Pework part 3:** Read 3 short case studies in preparation for your workshop discussions (10 mins).
- **Practitioner-led workshop** – Join your peers in a facilitated, discussion-based workshop, using contemporary case studies to “Enhance your integrity capability” (3.5 hours facilitated).*

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Participant benefits

- Increase your ability to exercise integrity and ethical decision making in all aspects of your work.
- Champion a culture of integrity and fulfil your role as a steward of that culture.
- Create environments where integrity discussions are mainstream, and staff engage consistently and positively with integrity.
- Build the integrity capability of teams and organisations.
- Stay up-to-date with integrity issues, trends and supporting tools and resources.

Suitable for

SES Band 1 - SES Band 3

Category and User Level

This learning experience aligns with the [Integrity \(/node/32\)](#) Craft at the Lead level.

Considerations

- An accessible text alternative to the digital handbook is also available (located directly underneath the digital handbook in APSLearn).
- Please ensure you complete all prework activities (approx. 3 hours in total) activities before the commencement of your facilitated workshop. You will be given access to these prework activities once you have enrolled in the SES Integrity Masterclass workshop. Don't forget to bring your completed digital handbook printout with you to the workshop.
- This is an updated version of "SES Integrity Masterclass Series: 2021-2024 (https://apslearn.apsacademy.gov.au/view_facetoface/292)". Any participants who have already completed the SES Integrity Masterclass course between 2021-2024 can access the previous course materials via their course completion history in APSLearn. Completion records for the 2021-24 version will remain valid, and there is no need for former participants to enrol in this new version.

How to enrol

Enrol in a date below for the SES Integrity Masterclass facilitated workshop. You will then receive access to the prework materials.

Price

\$2200 per participant. Payment by credit card.

Face-to-screen considerations

- Prior to the session start date, it is suggested that you check if your agency's network has any restrictions using any virtual classroom platform. If you are unable to access the virtual classroom platform on your work device or network, you will need to use a personal device.
- Please ensure you have access to a working camera and microphone to participate.

Additional Information

- To enrol in this session you will need a valid APSLearn (<https://apslearn.apsacademy.gov.au/>), profile.
 - Steps on how to create an APSLearn profile or to view FAQs can be found here (</node/90>).
 - If you have moved Departments or you have multiple APSLearn profiles, you can request to merge your profiles here (https://apslearn.apsacademy.gov.au/request_merge).
 - If your training venue is at MoAD, please refer to the directional map to assist with locating the training room (<https://www.apsacademy.gov.au/contact-us/aps-academy-training-venues>).
-

Attendance (Virtual)

When you attend a virtual session:

- Provide your name or email when joining, as our attendance reports record this information from the virtual classroom platform.
 - If you log into the session with a different email address to the one you are registered with, let us know to ensure your attendance is properly credited.
 - If you join as a group from one location or cannot provide your details during the session, please email us afterwards so we capture your attendance.
 - If we do not receive your information, you may receive a notice indicating you were not marked as attended.
-

* Capacity limits **may** apply. Please log into APSLearn (<https://apslearn.apsacademy.gov.au/>) to check availability.

- If the session is full or none of the additional sessions are suitable, you can express your interest, through APSLearn, for this event. You will be added to a mailing list to be notified when a new session becomes available.

Quick links

Topics: [Integrity \(/integrity\).](/integrity/) [Leadership \(/leadership\).](/leadership/)

Quick links for Learners

Categories: [Integrity \(/aps-craft/integrity\).](/aps-craft/integrity/)

Last updated: 7 May 2026

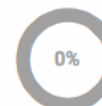


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SES Integrity Masterclass



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DESCRIPTION

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Suitable for

SES Band 1 - SES Band 3

Category and User Level

This learning experience aligns with the [Integrity](#) Craft at the Lead level.

Considerations

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How to enrol

Enrol in a date below for the SES Integrity Masterclass facilitated workshop. You will then receive access to the prework materials.

Price

\$2200 per participant. Payment by credit card.

LESS

* To complete the Live Learning you must complete all marked events.

SESSION TYPE	SESSION DATES	CAPACITY	SINGLE AGENCY - ORGANISATION	STATUS	
 Face to Screen	Start: 05/08/2026, 1:30 PM End: 05/08/2026, 5:00 PM	6 / 25	Mixed	Available	→
 Face to Face	Start: 19/10/2026, 9:30 AM End: 19/10/2026, 1:00 PM	2 / 25	Mixed	Available	→
 Face to Screen	Start: 09/03/2027, 1:30 PM End: 09/03/2027, 5:00 PM	0 / 25	Mixed	Available	→
 Face to Face	Start: 12/05/2027, 9:30 AM End: 12/05/2027, 1:00 PM	0 / 25	Mixed	Available	→
Load more Sessions				1-4 of 4	< >

If none of the above sessions are suitable, you can express your interest for this event. You will be added to a mailing list to be notified when a new session becomes available.

[Express Your Interest](#)

Activities

* Marked activities must be completed.

When accessing the **Strengthening your workplace integrity" digital handbook**, if you encounter yes / no buttons immediately upon opening, select CONTENTS in the top right corner and you will be taken to the contents page where you can navigate as normal.

If you have any questions, please contact APSAcademy@apsc.gov.au.

[Prewrite activities before attending facilitated workshop](#)

Championing an Integrity Culture panel discussion video

* 	50 min activity. This panel discussion features Dr Gordon de Brouwer (APS Commissioner), Prof. Glyn Davis (PM&C Secretary), Nicole Rose (NACC Deputy Commissioner) and Sam Chard (DISR Head of Division, Business Grants Hub) discussing the importance of championing an integrity culture in the APS. Please ensure you watch this to unlock other activities and complete this course. <i>Register for a session</i>	Incomplete
* 	Strengthening your Workplace Integrity digital handbook 120 min activity. The digital handbook provides foundational information needed to prepare you for the facilitated workshop. Included are short videos, readings, case studies, and activities to encourage reflection and note taking. These will be collated at the end of the handbook for you to print and bring to the workshop. Important note - Do not progress past the page indicating STOP unless you have completed all mandatory activities, case studies and self-reflection questions. If you do progress past this page the handbook will set itself as complete, and you will no longer be able to make updates to the sections that need completion. <i>Register for a session</i>	Incomplete
	Text alternative to strengthening your workplace Integrity digital handbook This is a text alternative word doc version of the Strengthening your workplace Integrity digital handbook. <i>Register for a session</i>	
* 	Case study prereading Please take an additional 10 mins to read these case studies prior to attending the facilitated workshop. <i>Register for a session</i>	Incomplete
Post workshop evaluation and resources		
	SES Integrity Masterclass - Post Course Evaluation Form Please complete a short evaluation survey for this learning experience. Your feedback will contribute to the continuous improvement of our learning initiatives <i>Register for a session</i>	Incomplete
	Additional course resource library This a compilation of relevant resources relating to the topics covered in this course. It can be used by those who are keen to explore any topics further, or who are seeking content to share with their leadership team. <i>Register for a session</i>	Incomplete
	Subscribe to the MyAcademy newsletter Stay informed of the latest news, events and offerings from the APS Academy	Incomplete

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NOT STARTED

SES Integrity Masterclass Series: 2021 to 2024



Complete

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DESCRIPTION

DETAILS

**** This course has been superseded by a [new version](#) from Jan 2025 and is only visible to past participants. All course activities will remain available as historical versions for those participants who completed the 21-24 version, and any records of course completion will remain valid (there is no need to complete the new version as well). A copy of 2 new resources from the updated version have been added to the below activities for anyone who is interested in voluntarily viewing the updated materials. Any new participants wishing to register for the SES Integrity Masterclass from Jan 2025 onwards should use [SES Integrity Masterclass](#) ****

The SES Integrity Masterclass Series is a three-part series designed to support SES staff to strengthen integrity culture within their organisation. The series has been developed in response to the 2020 *Report into consultations regarding APS approaches to institutional integrity*, led by Mr Stephen Sedgwick AO. The series includes:

- **Masterclass 1:** Championing an integrity culture – video resource (1-hour duration)
- **Masterclass 2:** Strengthening your workplace integrity culture – four self-directed videos and reading resources (approx. 3-hour duration)
- **Masterclass 3:** Enhancing integrity capability, Face to face workshop (3-hour duration)*

ⓘ ***Masterclass 1 and 2 (approx. 4 hours in total) must be completed prior to attending Masterclass 3.** ⓘ

This content has been provided by the APSC in partnership with the Australia and New Zealand School of Government.

Participant benefits

- Champion a culture of integrity and fulfil their role as stewards of that culture.
- Create environments where integrity discussions are mainstream, and staff engage consistently and positively with integrity.
- Build the integrity capability of their teams and organisations.
- Stay up-to-date with integrity issues, trends and supporting tools and resources.

Suitable for

SES Band 1 - SES Band 3

Category and User Level

This learning experience aligns with the [Integrity](#) Craft at the Lead level.

How to enrol

Enrol in a date below for the SES Integrity Masterclass 3 workshop. You will then receive access to

LESS

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SES Integrity Masterclass Series

Course Guide



SES Integrity Masterclass Series

Background

Integrity is the cornerstone of the Australian Public Service (APS) and is crucial to building a high-performing and trusted public service. Ensuring a high-level of trust, particularly with the Australian community, is critical in ensuring we continue to deliver quality outcomes.

Every member of the APS has an obligation to act with integrity. Senior Executive Service (SES) leaders have an increased role as the stewards of organisational culture and expectations.

To this end, the Australian Public Service Commission has developed an *SES Integrity Masterclass Series* - a program designed to support SES employees to strengthen integrity culture and capability within their organisations.

Building your integrity capability

The series will equip SES participants with the knowledge and tools to build key integrity capabilities on an individual and organisational level:

- **Championing integrity:** Cultivate an environment where managers and employees feel confident and motivated to raise integrity concerns, and have conversations about integrity in a consistent, positive and empowering way.
- **Ethical leadership:** Increase organisational perception and judgement of integrity issues, and foster a positive and collaborative working environment conducive to high-performance.
- **Promoting integrity:** Stay up-to-date with integrity issues and implement tools and resources to build the integrity capability of teams and organisations.

Learning objectives

The series comprises three masterclasses to support SES participants to better understand and build capability to champion integrity in their agencies. Upon completion of the course, participants are expected to:

- ✓ Define institutional integrity
- ✓ Understand why a pro-integrity culture is vital for the APS
- ✓ Define the role that SES employees play in stewarding a pro-integrity culture
- ✓ Apply techniques to promote ethical awareness and engage in ethical conversations
- ✓ Assess and manage organisational integrity

Suitable for

SES Band 1 - SES Band 3

Integrity is...

'the pursuit of high standards of APS professionalism, which in turn means doing the right thing at the right time to deliver the best outcomes for Australia sought by the government of the day.'

2020, Stephen Sedgwick AO, Report into consultations regarding APS approaches to ensure institutional integrity

SES Integrity Masterclass Series

Course Map

The course consists of recorded video content, case studies, a practical conversation guide and a face-to-face workshop. Follow the map below as a guide through the series.

■ Masterclass
 ■ Readings
 ■ Video
 ■ Workshop



Course overview

SES Integrity Masterclass Series	
Masterclass 1. Championing an integrity culture	
This pre-recorded event comprises an opening address from the APS Commissioner and sets the scene for the importance of integrity in the APS, the link to maintaining public trust, and the important role SES employees play in championing a strong integrity culture. A panel of integrity experts discuss their personal stories and experiences of managing integrity as senior leaders.	1 video (1 hour, self-paced)
Masterclass 2. Strengthening workplace integrity culture	
Four video modules will introduce key integrity concepts and provide practical guidance, knowledge and tools to help participants strengthen workplace integrity culture.	
2.1. Defining Integrity Key topics: - Individual and organisational integrity - Integrity motivations and blind spots - The golden rule - reflection - Integrity and organisational culture - Cultivating a reflective culture	1 video (25 minutes, self-paced) Suggested reading: - Fact sheet - Defining integrity - Fact sheet - Pro-integrity culture - Fact sheet - Upholding integrity
2.2. Leading with Integrity Key topics: - Defining ethical leadership - Styles of ethical leadership - Unethical leadership - Leading with trust - Ethical fading and unethical leadership - Psychological building blocks of trust - Ethical fading and warning signs of unethical leadership	1 video (50 minutes, self-paced)

SES Integrity Masterclass Series

2.3. Integrity Conversations Key topics: • Integrity conversations and organisational reflectiveness • Reactive, proactive and formal integrity conversations • Trust, leadership and integrity conversations • Psychological safety and pro-integrity cultures • Better practice integrity conversations	1 video (20 minutes, self-paced) Required reading: • Guide to Integrity Conversations
2.4. Integrity Management Key topics: • Ethical competence • Integrity health checks and managing risk • Conscious reflection as an integrity mechanism • Narratives, storytelling and sense-making	1 video (45 minutes, self-paced)
Masterclass 3. Enhancing Integrity Capability	
A structured peer learning environment will engage participants as leaders and decision-makers through a relevant and thought-provoking case study from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. You will work with other participants to discuss strategic responses to integrity failures, including a range of management tactics and institutional reforms. Discussion will stimulate reflection, synthesis and application of the concepts developed in Masterclasses 1 and 2 to support confident integration beyond the program.	1 face-to-face workshop (3 hours) Required reading: • Australian Bureau of Statistics Case Study • Key takeaways placemat



APSC SES Masterclass –

Masterclass 01

This recording was taken on Friday, 9th of February 2024

Gordon de Brouwer:

Hi, I'm Gordon de Brouwer, the Australian Public Service Commissioner. I'm joining you here from Ngunnawal country for the SES Integrity Masterclass. I'm really delighted to be talking with you about integrity and what it means for SES. Integrity means that we're honest, that we do our work with a clear conscience, that we're fair and open in how we conduct ourselves in doing our job. As public servants we have a unique and privileged position to serve the government and the Australian people and Parliament. In the way we support government providing services and policy for the Australian people and our natural world. Integrity matters. It's the basis of trust in government and trust in public administration.

We do our job well, but the public also knows that we're honest and fair in how we go about it. And that's the way we really deliver for the people and the government of Australia. The integrity landscape is changing. A number of years ago, the independent review into the public service highlighted the absolute importance of integrity in public servants being able to do their job well. The government's first priority for APS reform has been integrity. They did this through setting up the National Anti-Corruption Commission. By seeking to have stewardship as a new value for the public service. While focusing on not just delivery of outcomes, but also behaviour in SES and now Secretary and Statutory Officer performance. And by increasing the transparency of the Secretaries Board as well as a whole lot of other material that the public service collects about how the public thinks about the public sector.

The Robodebt Royal Commission has also had a profound impact on integrity and how we think of ourselves as public servants having integrity in what we do. And I think public servants overall were dismayed and shocked at the problems of integrity that arose, that were revealed by that commission. The Secretaries Board released a report or an action plan, 'Louder Than Words', which sets out how the public service itself can address some of the problems of integrity and stress just backing people in working with integrity in their jobs. Public servants take integrity seriously. And my experience as a public servant over a long time is that the vast bulk of public servants look to act with integrity in all that they do.

The building blocks of a strong integrity culture are shaped by three things. First, awareness of the obligations for working professionally and the role and responsibilities of agencies to support APS employees to understand and navigate challenges to ethical decision making. Second, the capability of APS employees themselves to identify and work through ethical challenges, ensuring that they have, or can develop, the skills to address integrity issues as they arise. The third is accountability for decisions and actions at every level and systems for addressing concerns about employees' integrity or conduct, appropriately and confidently. Part of that is also having systems that back-in employees on integrity.



The APSC and the APS Academy are here for you. We're here to provide resources to help you back-in integrity in what you do, and in working with your staff to help them in that. We want you to support a pro-integrity culture by talking about it. By working with your staff to increase their own focus on integrity. I'm really taken by the quote from the Integrity Task Force Action Plan. "Integrity requires action at all levels, but without the right tone and demonstration from the top, there'll be no lasting impact." Of the 170,000 people in the Australian Public Service, around 3,200 are SES. If the top 3,200 can't set the tone what can the other 170,000 do?

So what does the role of SES as stewards of an integrity culture mean? It means the importance of SES in championing and stewarding a pro-integrity culture. It means setting the tone, promoting culture and expectations, and being a role model in the workplace. It means fostering a pro-integrity culture for all activities, including your personal conduct at work, systems and practices. It involves creating and championing a psychologically safe culture where people can be themselves and raise questions and issues with you and do so without fear.

It means building awareness of obligations and ensuring accountability. And keeping records properly. It means helping employees identify and work through ethical challenges. Don't be afraid to ask questions and challenge. Normalise integrity conversations with your employees and invite them to ask you questions. Well, I hope you really enjoy this SES Masterclass in integrity and we'll turn now to the panel to hear their views and reflections and experience in developing and growing a pro-integrity culture.

Thank you.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Welcome everyone to the SES Integrity Masterclass panel discussion. This is the first of three parts in a series that is designed to improve your understanding as an SES of integrity, and to highlight your important role in stewarding and championing this throughout your agency and the APS.

My name's Rodney Lee Walsh and it is my privilege to be moderating the panel today. I was an SES for 16 years, 10 of which I spent at the Commonwealth Ombudsman's office. And based on that insight, I can commend the content of today's panel. It will really be quite a useful start to your learning journey.

Let me start too by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we are recording today's panel, the Ngunnawal people, and pay my respects to their elders past, present, and emerging. Let me also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands that all public servants are working on across Australia. And I can extend that respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who are joining us today.

We thank Dr. Gordon de Brouwer for setting up the topic today, and we are welcoming three esteemed panel members to talk about this important topic of integrity. We have Professor Glyn Davis, who is the secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. We're joined by Sam Chard, who is the head of the business grants and integrity division at the Department of Industry, Science and Resources. And we're joined by Nicole Rose, who's a deputy commissioner at the National Anti-Corruption Commission.

Glyn, could I start with you please? When we think of integrity, there's often a common misperception that integrity problems only befall those who have poor integrity. My time at the Commonwealth Ombudsman's office suggests that that's not the case and sometimes people with very strong ethics and strong integrity can also get into trouble from time to time. I'm just wondering if you agree with that proposition, what advice



would you be giving to SES who are facing that whole dilemma of looking at an issue from whether it's right or wrong?

Glyn Davis:

I think when people address integrity, there are two parts to this. There's people and there's structures, and they have to work together. So you need personal integrity, you need to live with the values, you need to know how to deal with issues when they come up. But around you, you need the structures, the infrastructure, the advice, the people you can get to. And ultimately if things aren't going well, a national anti-corruption commission or its equivalent. So it's the two coming together that matter.

And I saw this. Personally, I lived through this in Queensland in the Fitzgerald era where we had a lot of excellent public servants, but they worked in a system that was not supportive, that really made demands that were not reasonable. And when the Fitzgerald report and the report was implemented, the same people now had the structures behind them and the support. And it changed utterly the whole ethos of the public sector. It changed what people felt they could do, what they knew they had to do.

Now of course, that required training like this masterclass series that we're part of today, but it was profound. And within a year or two, you could see the entire culture had shifted and stayed shifted. And so yes, great people, but also support.

So if an SES officer finds themselves with an integrity dilemma, and it will happen to everybody along the way, it's how they've been trained, the values they've played, and that it's the system around them. And it's the two things together that will make for a culture of integrity, which is what we're all looking for.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Fitzgerald was a really important watershed moment in public sector examining itself and making improvements. And a recent example could be Robodebt as a classic instance of where some people are looking at the issues very narrowly about the kind of work they were doing, the circumstances they were in. But do you see wider lessons for the SES to draw out of integrity failings like Robodebt?

Glyn Davis:

I would encourage every SES officer at some point to read the Robodebt Royal Commission, at least the executive summary, which is a powerful statement about what can go wrong and relatively how easily it goes wrong. People invest in that process, and when someone raises doubts about the legality of that process, they really in some cases didn't want to know because it just made their life complicated. One of the big lessons of Robodebt was the power of the whistleblowers, the power of the people who did call it and eventually and often to personal cost. But eventually the messages were impossible to ignore and they changed ultimately the outcomes.

It is probably for this generation of public servants going to be the case that people want to come back to over and over again and learn from. And there's so much to learn from that case. That's why the executive summary is absolutely worth a read.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Totally agree. Glyn, from our observation, you've really made integrity a really overt point of focus. I'm really interested to know as head of Prime Minister and Cabinet, why has this been such an important issue for you?

Glyn Davis:



I lived in Queensland, because I saw what it's like and live with what it's like when you don't have it. And it undermines people's professionalism, their chance to do the job that they love and they care about. It's unfair to the public. It undermines trust in what we do as public servants. It just sends a powerful message to the community that we can be bought.

And I think why integrity is important is because the overriding majority of public servants are utterly committed to the values that they bring to the role, and they want to do the right thing. The job of the SES, and of agencies, and the people like me is to make sure they have the support, the training, the systems, and everything else they need to act on those values. And it's those things coming together that make it.

But that Queensland experience was fundamental for me about we know what bad looks like, but also that gave me huge confidence that you can change, and having changed, you can embed process.

Now nothing's perfect. There are still issues in Queensland. It still has an anti-corruption commission. It still has lots to do. So there's a certain amount of integrity failure that's going to be true in any system, but it was light years different. The Commonwealth has never had perhaps as dramatic a shift required. But we have the same challenges, the same incentives. And some recent decisions, particularly the loss of capacity as we contracted out so many jobs and people, have left us vulnerable. And that's why for me, integrity is utterly central to what we do.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Nicole, could I turn to you? We've heard a lot from many sources, the Thodey review, the APS reform priorities, that Louder Than Words integrity action plan about the importance of focusing on integrity in the APS. We've known for a long time that the code of conduct places a higher responsibility on senior executives. Now I'm really fascinated by your role at the National Anti-Corruption Commission, because you must have a lot of insights in terms of whole of system trends that might be coming up. I'm wondering if you can share some insights into some of the cultural factors that contribute to integrity failings, but I'm really interested too if you could also cast your mind back to the important roles you've had in the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission at AUSTRAC, and at CrimTrac as well.

Nicole Rose:

Quite a few questions in there, Rodney. Can I first say I completely agree with what Glyn just said about the difference between, there's a real spectrum of corruption. There's some really serious things that happened in the Fitzgerald inquiry, and of course there were serious outcomes from Robodebt, but when you do read that executive summary, you can see that many of them were mistakes that were compounded. And I think that's really interesting. So something I try and say when I first start talking to people is let's not talk about corruption, because most public servants would never believe that they're corrupt and they tend to switch off because corruption for many of us says, "I will take a bag of cash for something." And that's just something that none of us would ever consider.

So I like to talk about integrity and being pro integrity, because there's a whole grey area there that is quite difficult to navigate. And even now, I'm sure that we all have issues that you grapple with because they're not clear. And having those discussions about integrity is really important, because you need to have those robust exchanges with people to have to challenge you on what you are assuming is okay.

So what we're seeing is not unlike what other integrity commissions have seen or anti-corruption commissions and certainly very similar to ACLEI experience. We're seeing issues around procurement. We're seeing issues around promotion and recruitment, and we're also seeing issues around the misuse of information. But they're not as clear cut as you might think. So again, people might turn off because they think, "Well, I'm not getting paid money to get a certain supplier, or I'm not recruiting are the wrong people." But a lot of it is in that grey



that people have relationships that they're not declaring through code of conduct. So whether that's procurement, or recruitment, or promotion, they're not dealing with perception issues because they themselves believe that there's no problem. So why should anyone question me?

And then not having those hard discussions with people around them about things that they might think might be a problem. If you think something's a problem, it probably is. And if you're on safe ground, there should be no problem with having that discussion with trusted staff about, "Do you think that this is a problem? Do you think the perception would be something I should consider? Is there a better way of managing this?"

And having those robust conversations and having those uncomfortable questions asked is much better inside your team than if it's sent to the NACC, or raised by a whistleblower or an investigative journalist. So have those discussions with the people you trust.

When you talk about culture, yes, the culture failings that I saw particularly in AUSTRAC with our regulated population for managing money laundering risks, so mainly the banks are very, very similar to what I'm seeing in the public service, because threats to integrity are universal. It's silence. It's people not having the courage to speak up. It's about leaders relying on words instead of actions.

And those things were absolutely the case in AUSTRAC with regulatory failings, is that there were whistleblowers in the banks that knew that there were problems with their money laundering systems for years prior and they were shut down or ignored or seen to be problems. Because the focus was on profit, not on some of the systems and the procedures.

And here when we're seeing very, very similar things, commonwealth public servants are a group of educated, intelligent people that understand about risk, and they see it. And if you can get your staff, particularly as an SES leader, to feel psychologically safe and comfortable enough to raise those risks with you, then you can address them at the very beginning.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Is there a possibility that we assume too much knowledge amongst staff in terms of integrity? We make that assumption based on their intelligence, and their competence, and capability, and we don't then raise issues?

Nicole Rose:

Absolutely. And I always liken it to the old question of if you ask everyone if they're a good driver, most people will put their hand up. And I don't know whether you've been out in the road, but that's clearly not true.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Well, not now.

Nicole Rose:

So everyone thinks they're doing the right thing or many, many people think they're doing the right thing and assume that everyone else can see that. And sometimes, the issue is just about communicating in a transparent way so that if staff raise an issue of, "Why did you promote that person or why did you manage to do that recruitment or give that job to that staff member?" A lot of those issues that can end up as a complaint can be managed if you trust your staff, and you're transparent and open and have communication and talk through those issues. And they may actually raise an issue that you haven't thought of that you've got to address.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

I guess that's always the exposure risk from self-managing risk, this kind of nature.



Nicole Rose:

Correct.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Sam, could I throw to you, it's often not easy to identify complex integrity matters early on, or certainly early enough where the SES can effectively deal with them. Some of these develop at a range of operational touch points well ahead of any direct SES involvement. Can I ask you to think about your experience, and what are some of the warning signs that may be present in the early stages, that indicate that it's time to pause and reflect before deciding and acting?

Sam Chard:

Yeah, sure. So I think it really goes to Nicole's point. If it feels wrong, it's probably wrong. There's probably something not quite right if it feels not quite right. And the only way it will get better is if you actually intervene and you start to look at it in detail, transparent about it, communicate about it, and talk it through. You can kind of put issues off hope that they might go away, but time will only make it worse.

And I think for many SES, often the first time you see an issue, particularly a historical issue, is through your staff responding to an FOI, or a question on notice, or a journalist question. And as an SES, you get an answer in front of you and you think, "Well, that's a awfully convoluted way to answer that. Why can't we just answer the question?"

And when you start to kind of dig a little bit deeper, you discover, well, actually something wasn't handled in the best possible way that it could, that there is a huge drive from people to protect the reputation of government, or their department, or individual offices. And I think that often manifests in people feeling like they can't really be transparent around what's happened.

The reality is the only way you can actually build trust in government and really be protecting the department's reputation, or the government's reputation, or even your own is to actually be transparent about what's happened in the past and where you can try and fix it. And SES have to play the role in kind of getting to the bottom of that, giving staff the opportunity to talk it through, and really making it safe and comfortable for people to raise those issues and to draw it out.

Nicole Rose:

And genuinely not blame them.

Sam Chard:

Yeah, absolutely. And look for the way forward and the solution.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Absolutely. Glyn, could I suggest to you that the SES who are watching us here today, the idea of having an integrity conversation with a peer, with staff members, with a stakeholder, with a minister's office is not something that they often relish. Could I invite you to suggest what advice you might be giving them in terms of having those conversations, that sometimes can be very difficult? And as Sam said, oftentimes are delayed to the point where a small issue has become far, far worse because people are either self-managing the risk, or they're trying to avoid what otherwise could be a difficult conversation?

Glyn Davis:



Sure. I suspect Sam does this with her grant's team and her integrity branch, and it's a great practice for SES officers. If you have regular conversations with your team about integrity, then it's not such a problem to raise an issue when it comes up. If the whole group are used to the fact that this is part of your conversation, we do this in why are we comfortable, this is okay. So you are almost testing regularly the integrity of the work that the whole team is doing.

When you hit something that's problematic, whether you do it in a group or you take someone aside for a conversation, they know that this matters to you, but they also know that this is a regular question. This hasn't just come up because this is something that the team asks itself all the time. That's building integrity into process and into the culture. And I find that that makes it a lot easier to have those awkward and difficult conversations.

Now, often those conversations I said earlier are about people you know, and like, and work with. And nobody enjoys that, and it goes with the territory. And you can't be an SES officer and not be willing to do that. And I'm sure everybody who's watching us has encountered that at some point.

But again, if those colleagues, peers, people you know that this is just taken for granted as the ordinary work of what we do and it's part of how we do it. Then in sense, they can't be surprised that you're raising it and nor can they take offense because you are behaving completely consistently.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Sam, could I throw back to you? I'm reminded of the great phrase, "When in doubt discuss." And it's a solid reminder for SES, but we also need our staff to have a level of comfort in having discussions about integrity matter. Now, Department of Industry, Science and Resources has actually set up an integrity branch and I'm really interested to find out what it's doing in terms of supporting staff and how it's going in doing that.

Sam Chard:

Yeah, sure. So we had experienced an ANAO audit around the entrepreneurs program, and that identified for us quite a bit of conflict of interest that's really inherent when you're working with small emerging industries. You're consulting with the same people who are going to potentially be beneficiaries of programs, or grants, or procurements, and that's really inherent in so much of the work that the department of industry does. So we'd been learning a lot from that audit. Also had Robodebt and the findings at that time, the establishment of the NACC. It seemed really timely for us to look at how we could support staff.

We, like many departments, had a whole range of functions that relate to integrity sort of around different divisions in the department, and took the decision to bring it all together so we would have a kind of critical mass of capability, and create a bit of a one-stop shop for staff to go to on integrity matters. So you didn't have to navigate, was something a risk problem? Was it a potential fraud? Was it potential corruption? Is it a code of conduct? You could go to one place to get some advice.

That integrity branch has now developed and released an internal integrity strategy for the department that's based on three C's. So controls, culture, and capability. The control stuff, I think that's fairly straightforward. That's about making the rules really clear and getting the guidance and the documentation out there and available. The culture and the capability part, that's the really challenging stuff.

And I think for us in the department, it was what really drew our attention to the fact that judgment is a skill. We often treat judgment, people's ability to make good judgments like it's some innate characteristic, but actually it's a skill that needs to be developed. And so if you're going to develop that capability, you need to put in place the kind of infrastructure. It goes to Glyn's comment before about the systems that are in place.

So we've been trying to do that by setting up things like hypotheticals and other forums, where we're being really overt about talking through messy things, where there's that grey area of decision making and making



people feel really comfortable about having those kinds of conversations and talking them through. Got quite a bit of a way to go yet I think in implementing it all, but definitely headed in the right direction.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Glyn, could I throw it back to you? How important is psychological safety in creating workplaces where staff feel that speaking up is not a heroic act, but simply part and parcel of doing a great job as a public servant?

Glyn Davis:

The Robodebt example shows us how hard that is to do, and how difficult it is for individuals, and in some cases how they were treated as a consequence. Not everybody, some managers behaved superbly well. So this isn't a blanket criticism, but there was some individual experiences that were tough. So clearly it's difficult to speak up in the workplace. And probably the more junior you are, the more difficult and confronting it is to talk to SES, which puts a big onus on SES and how we each manage our teams.

This is the same thing. If the signal isn't right, if they don't feel that they can raise concerns, if they don't feel they'll be listened to carefully, why would they put themselves at risk?

And so it matters. It's not easy to do. Sam's just told us how a hard culture is to create and sustain, and that's exactly right. And yet, that's the driving factor. After you put the systems in place, after you put the rules and make them clear, culture is what will carry you forward. And that's the hard thing to do.

It goes to the messages to people, and it goes to the demonstrated example. You can say this all you like, but when someone puts up the hand and says, "Now let me tell you what's actually going on." If they feel you haven't taken them seriously, you haven't looked, you haven't responded, and you haven't closed the circle by letting them know what happened, why would anyone else do it? That will be discussed. You'll never hear it, but it will be discussed. And when it is discussed, it will not reinforce the culture you're looking for.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Nicole, could I put the same question to you about the importance of psychological safety amongst staff so that messages are being relayed to the people who can actually do something about addressing the risks that people are noticing?

Nicole Rose:

So I think there's a whole lot of things you can do, but I think we also have to recognize the practicality and the reality of what our staff face day-to-day. And on one hand, we're telling them to be very innovative all the time, and to think of ways around problems, and be a can-do public servant. Ministers, and secretaries, and supervisors will reward that. But as we saw in Robodebt, where does the line between being a can-do public servant and trying to find ways around the legality of something?

And that's where I think the conversations are really important, because people need to feel safe enough to say, "Look, I think we can get around this problem by this. Legal have concerns around this. What do we think about that? Should we go and ask for legislative change, or is this just a really bad idea and we should think of something else?"

They're the sorts of conversations where people don't feel stupid, they don't feel that they're putting themselves out there. They're trying to find a solution to deliver for the community, and they're not made to feel ashamed for it. And if they're questioning the way we're doing something, that they're not punished for it either, either overtly or covertly. And as Glyn says, they're exactly the ways that staff will then leave that meeting and go and talk to each other and, "I'll never say that again. I'll never suggest something way out. They say they want us to be innovative," but as soon as you say something, you shut down.



So there are all those discussions that we need to be really open about and not defensive about. And it's difficult. I think it's particularly difficult for new SES, if they're coming from an EL cohort where they want to make it clear that we're not in the friend group anymore. I'm the supervisor, and I got promoted because I know everything. Well, you don't. None of us do.

And it's okay you say that you don't. If you've genuinely got a diverse group, you've got people that are much better at some things than you are, or you should. And you've got to value that and ask for feedback. Yes, when you make a decision, you've got to stand by it and that's your decision. But if you don't get that input and you don't have that engagement, you'll hear about it in some other way later on. And I think that's vital.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

From your vantage point at NACC, have you looked out and seen some examples of workplaces that the SES audience watching this interview can have regard to in modelling things within their local environment that you could share?

Nicole Rose:

Yeah, absolutely. So two things about sitting from the position of NACC. Firstly, please don't be fearful that we are here. This is, we're here to actually, we're here to help. We are actually here to help because it's about building the capacity and capability in the federal public service. It's not to sit there and catch people out. And it's about, we call it flexing your integrity muscle. You're not necessarily just given this fantastic integrity bone when you become an SES, a muscle or bone. I've got to get that right. But you've got to do something, but you've got to practice it and you've got to challenge it. And that's part of those discussions.

So in the NACC, we're not looking at tripping people up or finding people to blame or looking at mistakes. We all make mistakes. We're not looking at mistakes. We're looking at serious and or systemic corruption. So we are genuinely wanting to help the public service improve in this area, not sitting there waiting to catch people out. Sorry, what was the second part of the question?

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Just to try to see if you could nominate a couple of workplaces that you've seen.

Nicole Rose:

Oh, yes.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

You think to yourself, "That's quite a mature pro integrity workplace culture."

Nicole Rose:

So what I think is fantastic is the census. And I think we should continue to encourage our staff to be engaged in the census, because it's not just the integrity questions in the census that we're interested in. It's all the other indicators of, do your SES communicate well together? Do you feel that you're supported in your workplace? Would you recommend your workplace as a good place to work?

Now they're all indicative of culture, and they're all the things that we know when there's a poor culture and people aren't supporting each other, when there's perceived nepotism, even if it isn't there, and those range of things, they come out in the census. And they're often a pretty good indicator of if there are integrity risks there..



Glyn Davis:

Can I just go back to your point about not being afraid of the NACC, which is exactly right, but the NACC does two things for anti-corruption, but it's a last resort. In the sense it does give individuals a pathway to raise things they have not been able to do.

Nicole Rose:

Absolutely.

Glyn Davis:

That matters because in the absence of it, you have no way to resolve. The second thing is it's human nature that when you're being watched, you behave differently. And anti-corruption commissions have that effect in the system because they make people aware that there is a consequence, potential consequence to bad behaviour. It's not the reason for behaving ethically. It's certainly not the driver, but it is actually important just because it also gives you a chance to remind other people. Remember, it's not just us making this decision or it's not just us reviewing this decision. It might be someone else. That's just an important reminder that-

Nicole Rose:

And I think that's a great question to bring into the conversation when you are talking about, is this the right way to go? And when you talked earlier about if you have like Sam is having regular conversations about integrity, it's then not personal because you're not saying, "I don't like that decision you did," or, "Why did you make that decision?" You're having the conversation of, "Is this the best decision for the department? If we have to talk about this to the NACC about why we did this decision, what reasons are we going to give?" And so it's not about the person, it's about the group and the decision. And so you're absolutely right.

I just like to emphasize the prevention and education part of the NACC, because it's a little bit like being a regulator. You really do want to help your community to raise the bar, and we are there to do that.

But absolutely, as you say. There's now, I think we're at 2,500 referrals in the first seven months. So there's a lot of people out there that have a lot of things to say, and that's a great thing that they're feeling confident enough to send that through either with a name on it or anonymously, and I hope we see it continue.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Great. Nicole, if you were to sort of summarize what are the key education messages, you'd love the SES to be taking on board from that?

Nicole Rose:

It's nothing that they won't have heard before, but it's being genuine in behaving that way with their teams. So it's communication, it's transparency, it's record keeping. It's having the conversations, so that the culture supports issues being raised early and people not being punished for it. It's encouraging teams to make the best decisions with the information they've got available and feeling psychologically safe if they see issues.

The information's all there. There's lots of resources out there at APSC and the NACC and PM&C. There's a whole range of ways that people can start to flex their integrity muscle, but it's got to be genuine actions. And then SES have to behave the way they're telling their staff to behave, because they're watched, and there's no point in telling staff to behave one way and they're behaving a different way yourself.

Rodney Lee Walsh:



That role of SES being incredibly visible to their workplaces can perhaps speak volumes that an agency head can't when giving a direction about embracing a pro integrity culture if they see inconsistent behaviours locally.

Nicole Rose:

Correct.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

How conscious do SES need to be individually in terms of those things? Are they modeling constantly? Are they attempting to try and communicate with others to those effects?

Nicole Rose:

I think they're doing both. But then there's that part of authentic leadership, that if they're modeling and they make a mistake or they're not sure, they've got to be honest about that. And that takes bravery, but it also shows to your staff that you're human and that you are not willing to blame others when you may have made a mistake. And we make mistakes, but it's what we do in response to that that is often the key. We do see referrals where the original mistake is not nearly as serious as the behaviour that occurred thereafter to try and cover it up.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Yeah. We have an opportunity now to have a think about some final thoughts that you could leave our SES cohort with as they make their way through this program. Sam, could I start with you? Are there any final thoughts that you might want to suggest to our audience?

Sam Chard:

Yeah, look. I think as SES, we have pretty big egos. Our kind of self-confidence and our confidence in our decision-making is what got us here. Once you're in the SES, that's reinforced over time, and people look to you to make the calls and you get comfortable about that.

You have to strip away your ego when it comes to really talking about integrity matters. You've got to be seen much more as somebody who's quite comfortable about not knowing all the answers. Getting advice, talking to people, hashing things out, not always getting it quite right. And I think that's a massive cultural thing for us to shift, and it's-

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Quite a level of vulnerability.

Sam Chard:

Absolutely.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

So I don't have all the answers. Does that go to Nicole's point about authenticity and leadership?

Sam Chard:

Yeah, I think so. I think we need to show more of ourselves and more of our vulnerability, and be much more comfortable with talking to our colleagues.



Rodney Lee Walsh:

Nicole.

Nicole Rose:

Yes. Now, that doesn't give staff... It's not a free for all. We still need to behave professionally and treat others with respect. But it absolutely is, particularly for new SES that are trying to prove why they got there. It's a difficult balance. But then again, you've got some SES that have been senior for a very long time that have the pressure of having all the answers, and we just don't.

I think it's also incumbent on succession planning and developing your staff of having those conversations that you too will have times where you are the most senior person in the room, possibly the boss, and it will all be up to you. So learn how to reduce your risk by relying on your team, talking to your staff, and making decisions not in isolation.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Nicole, do you feel the pressure a little bit on the visibility of NACC to the public? Certainly the actions of public servants now have almost become the province of ordinary public comment, whereas it really wasn't for a long, long time.

Nicole Rose:

So we're having lots of discussions about this in the NACC, not unsurprisingly. There's a few factors. Complex investigations, which are the ones that we're focusing on with serious and systemic take a long time, and there's a process to go through. People have a right of reply. There's procedural fairness. There are a range of things that need to occur, which means that we're not going to rush through things.

Then we've got media interest in many of the issues. And whether it's Australian culture at the moment or more international, people want someone to blame when they feel that something has gone wrong. And there are a range of remedies, whether it be criminal, or civil, or we are looking at code of conduct. And corruption is one part of that, and it is quite difficult and narrow an area.

So we are conscious that if we don't have the remedy that people are expecting or that media have raised the expectations of, there's a narrative there that we're going to need to explain with the public.

And there's also, we're very conscious of the trust that's been put in us for protecting those that have had the courage to come forward about things and the way we manage that.

So there's a range of issues that we're balancing, and am sure that when we find that there is no corruption, there will be, in some ways, just as much that people want to say about that as when we do find there's corruption.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Thank you, Glyn. The final, final word.

Glyn Davis:

So we are incredibly fortunate to be SES officers. It's just a privilege. We get to make decisions, we get to shape policy advice, we get to run programs, we get to look after other people and make a difference in their lives. And not surprisingly, there are expectations that go with that authority, that responsibility.

Integrity has been much talked about in the last year. It's a necessary part of being a public servant. It isn't going away, but hopefully it becomes less needed to be talked about, because the changes that have come



through and that are being discussed and are being implemented, I think will provide the structures that we started off. So we have great people will have great structures. And put those two together, we should have a very robust system. I agree with Nicole, we will not get to a point where there is no corruption. But even so, we have the systems to now identify, manage. We empower people to call it, and as SES officers, we have responsibility to look to those messages and act on them.

But that said, this is a routine part of our work, and it will be a skill that we all have to develop and will develop over time because it'll be part of the selection for who gets into the SES. In a sense, it's one of the things you're looking for when you're looking to promote.

The SES is not a large group. Across the whole country, it's not a large group. These are fabulous people. These are people who care about what they do. Our job is to just make sure they can. And their job, our job as SES, their job as leaders is to make sure that's true in their teams as well, and that the next generation of public servants coming through have the advantage of these great models that they've worked with, learned from, and can see why this matters. And I think we can do all of that.

Rodney Lee Walsh:

Thank you. That's all we have time for in this discussion series, but certainly some of the items that have struck me is the importance of communicating, to be speaking about integrity, to normalize as part of the conversation that we have with our staff. Second one, very strongly coming through was the importance of fostering psychological safety so that staff feel comfortable also raising issues that they see in a timely way, without fear of reprisal and concerns like that.

It's certainly also incumbent upon SES to make sure that they are welcoming those kinds of conversations and making themselves vulnerable, and not attempting to assume that they know everything about an issue prior to that information coming forward from them. It's a very, very important issue. It's an important topic, and I commend the rest of the series to you. But in doing that, on behalf of the APS Academy, can I thank Professor Glyn Davis, Sam Chard, and Nicole Rose.

Gordon de Brouwer:

Well, I hope you enjoyed that panel on Integrity for SES. I'd like to reiterate Rodney's thanks - to the panel, and his chairing of the session, and also for them sharing, with vulnerability their experience and insight. So what can you do to bring integrity into your role as an SES? SES are role models in balancing serving the government of the day and bringing integrity to their decision making and implementation. Integrity is developed through critical reflection. Take time out to think, and talk it through. Leading with integrity entails trustworthiness and authenticity.

Regular integrity conversations engender a reflective space in your workplace, and they encourage psychological safety with your staff. Feeling safe to speak up is an essential feature of having a pro-integrity culture. And that's your responsibility. Leaders need to be able to have conversations about the grey areas with your colleagues and also with ministers. When in doubt, take a critical pause. SES support is available through the Ethics Advisory Service. The Commissioner's SES advisor. Your department or agency conflict of interest area, manager or trusted peer. And you can always come to the Commission.



Please refer to the APS Academy Integrity Craft page for you and for your staff. I really encourage you to continue with the SES Integrity Masterclass. Talk with your colleagues, look at some of the resources there. Engage with academics and other thinkers. And share your own experience and the challenges that you've faced and how you've addressed integrity in the past.

Thank you.