

# **Working with government – what the public servant should know**

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# A Good Society

- A good society needs a good public sector; one that is efficient, effective and ethical.
- It follows that how we organise and govern that public sector is of great importance.

# A Good Public Sector

Political Leadership



Independent  
Scrutiny



Quality  
Public  
Service



Pressure  
from below



# The Public Service

The public service is an institution not a “passive instrument” (Woodrow Wilson)

# **Accountability**

Public servants are accountable to both the elected government and the public interest and its protectors.

# **What should public service deliver?**

- Well managed systems of service delivery.
- Sound advice to Government.
- If an independent agency of accountability rigorous scrutiny of the public sector.

# The Real World of Advice

- Making things happen in a complex and competitive environment is not just a case of 'reason' and 'evidence'.
- There are ideologies, interests, ambitions, personalities, circumstances.

# Political Nous

- Environmental and strategic awareness.
- Social and organizational astuteness.
- Capacity to align and form alliances.
- Interpersonal influence.
- Emotional intelligence.



# Within the Executive

- Premier and his/her office.
- Ministerial offices with their ideologues, populists, the captured and the policy wonks
- Various “Influences”.

# **The Public Service and Government**

First task – to know about the government, its aspirations and goals, its operating principles and practices and its particular ministers and their offices.

# **Strategies for working with government**

1. Pressure.
2. Passivity.
3. “Yes Minister”.
4. Principled Partnership.

# Principled Partnership

- Clear understanding of roles and responsibilities.
- Agreed protocols regarding ministerial offices, media and communication.
- No surprises/no skulduggery, alertness to threats and opportunities.
- Proper degree of formality.

# Advice

Advice needs to be “frank, honest, timely and based on best available evidence. It is politically neutral but not politically naïve, and takes a long-term view” (APSC, 2010)

# Key Points

- Know about government and minister
- Develop a working relationship, day-to-day
- Add value to government
- Keep a close “public interest” eye on developments
- Be prepared for “hard talk”
- MANAGE YOUR AGENCY WELL