

**A.C.T. Chief Minister
Rosemary Follett:**

Address

to

**1994 Government Administrative
Assistants:
*"Progress with the separate A.C.T.
Government Service"***

**Committee Room 1, ACTAC
10:30am Thursday 17th February 1994**

Welcome, distinguished guests, and most importantly, the 1994 intake of Graduate Administrative Assistants to the ACTGS.

The GAA program is a particularly important component of our workforce. You form the nucleus for our future, and bring new and innovative thinking to the middle ranks of the ACTGS. Your group is also unique because you will be the last intake of graduate assistants under the current public service arrangements.

So, today, I'd like to take the opportunity to give you an update on the progress of our separate A.C.T. Government Service.

It was in August 1993 that the Government outlined its plans for the separate Service.

The Government called for the development of a public service of excellence, composed of professional staff to act with integrity and probity in the provision of advice to the Government and services to the community.

The development of the new arrangements has been a difficult and complex task, involving broad consultation with staff, with unions, with the Commonwealth Government and with other groups in the community.

We are now almost ready to present specific proposals to the Legislative Assembly. I welcome the opportunity for further public debate, and I look forward to launching the new Service on 1 July 1994.

The ACTGS will be a unified service, with common values and standards.

Staff will be treated equitably, with common employment conditions, although differences can be accommodated where this is sensible.

Staff will be able to move freely across the Service consistent with their abilities and interests, and I believe this will encourage a more diverse and multi-skilled workforce with broader opportunities for progress and career development.

The Public Sector Management Bill will be available to the Select Committee of the Assembly in March. ^{*the bill when enacted*} It will provide the employing authority for nearly all ACTGS staff, helping to create a unified A.C.T. Government Service.

The Bill will set out the values the Government expects the ACTGS to hold. It will set out the public administration principles its managers are to achieve, and it will set out the duties and obligations expected of each employee.

The Bill includes specific provision for EEO programs and for access and equity programs. Prohibition of harassment, particularly sexual harassment is a particularly important inclusion.

A key element of accountability in modern public service is the empowerment of officials to report mal-administration and to be sure that their reports are investigated. So we have included in the Bill what is known as 'Whistle blower' provisions.

Employment provisions will be streamlined, and the ^{Bill} ~~Act~~ will allow permanent part time employment at all levels across the Service.

Again in line with best practice, the ^{Bill} ~~Act~~ acknowledges that the Government is responsible for the efficient and effective public administration of the ACTGS.

To this end, we have decided to have a chief adviser in the Central Management Agency, who will also be responsible for issuing the rules that underpin the legislation.

Individual staffing decisions will rest with Chief Executives, who will also be responsible for the efficiency management of their department, as well having a responsibility to the Government as a whole.

The Government has decided Chief Executive powers will be given not only to Agency heads, but also to some statutory office holders such as the Auditor General.

The heads of ACTEW and the Legal Aid Commission will also have a range of powers relating to personnel policy.

Best practice will also be adopted in the introduction of Public Sector Management Standards. These rules underpin the public administration of the ACTGS, and follow a new concept of including, in the one volume, all relevant directions and guidelines.

Negotiations with the Commonwealth are nearing completion.

We have reached agreement on the key elements of the separation from the Commonwealth Public Service Act, particularly on the matter of continued access to the Commonwealth superannuation schemes and to Comcare. Access is also available to Commonwealth training and intake programs.

The A.C.T. Government Service will also continue to use the services of Merit Protection and Review Agency for grievance and appeal matters, and the services of the Remuneration Tribunal.

On mobility between the two Services, final details still need to be resolved, but there is agreement that present and future officers of both Services will be able to apply for permanent vacancies in the other Service.

I expect our agreement will be the first really effective mobility scheme between Public Services in Australia and one which will serve as a model for other governments.

I expect the new Service will start on 1 July 1994, as the machinery should be in place by that time.

In recognition of the major attitude shift required of A.C.T. Government Service employees - including many who have worked for the Commonwealth Public Service all their working life - around April, we will be implementing a program to train employees in the new arrangements and to develop an awareness and pride in the opportunities provided by the new Service.

The Government is justifiably proud of the achievements to date, and of the amount of innovation already demonstrated. But we are aware that there are still many milestones to pass -the next most significant of these will be the enactment of the Public Sector Management Act.

Over the next few years I expect there will be substantial progress in public administration, for example in equal employment opportunity, behaviours in the workplace and an increased level of innovation in management improvement.

We aim to make the A.C.T. Government Service one which will be at the forefront of public administration in Australia.

And, on that note I'd like to welcome each of you to the A.C.T. Government Service and wish you the very best in your careers.

ENDS