

RSOG Seminar

“Public Sector Reform: The Australian Experience”

with

Terry Moran

Former Chief Secretary to the Government of Australia

When : 10 August 2012
Where : Razak School of Government
Who : Terry Moran

About The Seminar

The seminar centred on Terry Moran’s personal experiences as a central influencing figure in Australia’s public sector reform, interspersed with specific stories and incidences that have resonance with the mainly-Malaysian audience. The seminar was regarded as timely and most relevant as Malaysia pushes forward with its own transformation agenda.

Summary

Mr. Moran began by illustrating the situation that Australia was in, which warranted a reform of the public service – emphasising that it was not in any need of an overhaul, as Australia’s civil service has been known to be quite sound but in order to keep up with other micro- and macroeconomic transformations that were taking place. In particular he noted the need to increase economic competitiveness to deal with an aging population and its implication on superannuation and to respond to heightening environmental concerns.

In all of these, the public service was a critical player. Hence its own need for reform, as well as in the conviction that the public service is ever-evolving and never static. Thus came the development of “Ahead of the Game”, the blueprint of civil service transformation, which Mr. Moran led.

The blueprint recommended 9 signature reforms, grouped under the core components of high performance. They are:

- i. Delivering better services for citizens

- ii. Creating a more open government
- iii. Enhancing policy capability
- iv. Reinvigorating strategic leadership
- v. Introducing a commission to drive change and provide strategic planning
- vi. Clarifying and aligning employment conditions
- vii. Strengthening the workforce
- viii. Ensuring agency agility, capability and effectiveness
- ix. Improving agency efficiency

Because the Australian civil service was constrained by the proportion of GDP allocated to it, it had to become extremely lean and efficient. Thus there was the need for a shift in culture and a shift in where the public service stood in relation to the government and to the Australian public. Secretaries of agencies had to assume a larger role as stewards of each agency's direction and achievement; and public servants had to assess their own performance in relation to public expectations and aim to meet those expectations.

Questions, Complaints & Comments Raised

- 1 The role of the Australian Productivity Commission and its management in the reform exercise.
- 2 The extent to which the reform helped indigenous groups.
- 3 Australia's experience in attracting and retaining the right talent into the public service.
- 4 Australia's experience in healthcare reform, an area where most countries have faced issues.
- 5 How effective have the Secretaries' Board and the Public Service Commission been
- 6 The extent to which public services are outsourced or privatised

About the Speaker

Terence Francis "Terry" Moran was Australia's Chief Secretary from March 2008 to September 2011. He was appointed by former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, and continued in the position under Rudd's successor Prime Minister Julia Gillard.

Mr. Moran chaired the Advisory Group on the Reform of Australian Government Administration, where he led in the development of "Ahead of the Game", a blueprint for

reform of the Australian Public Service. The blueprint has been credited as one of the global best practices in public sector reform, along with other notable work under his leadership. During the global financial crisis in 2008 and 2009, Mr. Moran contributed significantly to the development of Australia's highly successful policy responses.

He is currently a Special Adviser on Public Sector Reform at the Boston Consulting Group, a member of the Grattan Institute Board (and Chair of its Public Policy Committee) and is a governor of the Committee for Economic Development of Australia.

Contact

To get more information on this event, you can contact us via email at programmes@rsog.com.my