

ANAO Graduates –  
Graduate Recall Day

**Graduate Recall**

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At the outset I would like to congratulate all of you at the virtual completion of your training year on your final recall day. This will come to a formal end with your promotion to ASO Grade 4 positions which will be notified in the Commonwealth Gazette this Thursday, 16 November. As such, this is a good opportunity to recognise the contribution already made by the first graduate group in the ANAO for three years during the last year. It is no exaggeration to say that you are an essential element in the regeneration and rejuvenation of this Office.

The main purpose of today's session is to assist in the development of the program for the 1996 graduate intake. We need to learn from your experience. This is your opportunity to contribute to someone else's development and enhance the attractiveness of the ANAO as a place to work. You have heard me say that part of my personal vision for the ANAO is to create an environment in which people want to work. I hope more professionals in both the public and private sectors will regard at least some period in this Office as important in their career planning and personal development. More about that later.

For many of you the promotion next Thursday will be your first real job. That is a big deal as I can well recall. It introduces a different kind of reality into our lives. What you do in the next year or so and how you go about organising yourself and your time, and the various balances you need to achieve in your lives, will largely set the pattern for your future development. It is so easy to fit into particular work habits and so difficult to change them. But always remember you are not on your own. Your immediate work team and the Office as a whole are there to provide support. Never hesitate to take advantage of it. As with the purpose of this recall day, you should also endeavour to contribute as well as take out from these resources. You are certainly in a unique position to contribute now to next year's Graduate Program. I know you will do so.

I do not want to exaggerate your position in the Office but I should warn you that there are high expectations of our graduates. You do not become ordinary from Thursday. You will not lose your graduate intake tag nor should you. What is anticipated, rightly or wrongly, is an open mind and a flexible approach, the ability to respond quickly, fresh ideas and a challenge to conventional wisdom and embedded ideas and processes. I would like to think that those aspects would provide a personal challenge to each one of you. We are all different. We have particular strengths and weaknesses. We do not all approach people and issues in the same way, thank heavens. Hopefully we can complement each other in a team environment. The real discipline and a key to success is the ability to listen and to endeavour to stand in the shoes of the other person so as to understand better their perceptions and where they are coming from. The next group of graduates will look to you for encouragement, consolation and even inspiration. I regret that you did not have that advantage.

I am of the view that this is a particularly exciting and challenging time to be in the public service. What we are witnessing in Australia and overseas is government in transition. Some have labelled this phenomenon as Redefining Government. At the federal level, the various public service reforms over the past twelve years are assisting that transition to take place. The need is to ensure that public trust and confidence in the institution of Government is at least maintained and preferably enhanced. The key to the success of the various reforms in the Australian Public

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Service (APS) is, in my view, the transparency of decision-making involving the maximum disclosure and availability of all relevant information to those decisions. The ANAO has an important role to play in both promoting and ensuring such accountability for performance.

There are particular challenges for us as an Office. It is imperative that we are respected and credible. That requires ongoing evidence of adherence to the values we set for ourselves in our Corporate Plan. As well, we need to be seen to be truly independent and professional in our analyses, investigations and reports. In the financial statements area, we will have to focus more on national and international convergence in accounting and auditing approaches, including standards issues. A number of you will be aware of questions being asked about the application of largely private sector accrual based accounting and reporting approaches and techniques to the public sector. This is also in the context of a greater convergence between those sectors as well particularly as we are witnessing not only a greater emphasis on contracting out to the private sector but also the growing provision of government services - including what have traditionally been accepted as core services - by private sector firms. There are common issues of concern such as internal control, corporate governance and codes of ethics. The new audits of Financial Controls and Administration are relevant to these aspects. As well, we are moving into the use of automated software tools for audit purposes.

In the performance audit area, we see the growing emphasis on performance information, benchmarking, quality client service delivery, purchaser/provider splits and the greater use of market type mechanisms. This is a new environment for most public servants and one in which I am confident the ANAO can add real value to overall public administration. The opportunities are enormous, the stakes are high and job satisfaction is guaranteed.

Finally, staying on the reality front, training and other personal development is now the responsibility of you and your managers. As you are aware, the ANAO regards these aspects as an important part of the personal appraisal process, whether performance pay is involved or not. I have indicated on a number of occasions that I support secondments and exchanges with both the rest of the public sector and the private sector as an accepted element of career development. Conventional wisdom now seems to suggest that most people will have three or four major job shifts in their careers which are likely to involve re-training and perhaps even different kinds of expertise.

I have been speaking with the big 6 and also some second tier accounting firms about possible interchanges. This initiative has been widely supported. In fact, only in the last day I have again raised with Ernst & Young, for example, the possibility of exchange of graduates perhaps in their third year, that is, after their graduate year and at least twelve months on-the-job experience to understand the Office environment and culture, including the values I referred to earlier. This is particularly important for graduates in FABU who will have to receive training and experience in the use of audit automated software over the next year or so. I suggest it is imperative to ensure you are very familiar with that tool before you contemplate a move elsewhere.

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You can expect the on-going support from the Office for your personal development and career planning. I do not expect people to make their careers solely in the ANAO. To the contrary, you will be better auditors with a variety of experience in different environments under your belt. I do expect that, if we provide you with a supportive environment, that you will give us a reasonable period of service. I suggest a three to five year planning period, with about that period being the time you would at least spend in any one organisation other than, of course, on secondment or interchange.

In conclusion, I wish to thank publicly Ruth Perrett for her efforts not only in guiding you through this year but also for the high profile she takes in the ANAOs personal development activities. Your efforts are very much appreciated by your colleagues. While there is a number of staff who have played a significant role in this years graduate program and whom I must thank, I hope they will not be offended if I mention three people who have acted as graduate co-ordinators in particular. They are Lynne OBrien, Trevor Burgess and Colin Cronin. We all owe you a debt of gratitude. On that note, I wish you well for your final recall day.