GOVERNMENT HOUSE
SYDNEY

Speech

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Governor of New South Wales

Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) NSW Spann Oration: *"Institutions"*

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1. *Bujari gamarruwa*
   Diyn Babana Gamarada Gadigal Ngura
   In greeting you in the language of the Gadigal, Traditional Owners of these lands and waterways, I pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

2. Thank you, Mark, for the invitation to deliver the 2025 Spann Oration. May I take this opportunity to offer my congratulations to the IPAA New South Wales, on your 90th Anniversary. At the inaugural meeting in 1935, Sir Phillip Whistler Street, the Lieutenant-Governor of NSW and inaugural President, spoke of the work of the Institute as being a *"fresh service to the public"*.

3. In highlighting the importance of public administration in our society, he said *"Public Administration has been defined as the management of men [and women] and materials in the accomplishment of the purposes of the State."* He further spoke of the need for the *"Civil Service to concentrate on excellence."*[1]

4. In 1983, the Institute initiated the Spann Oration in honour of Richard Neville Spann, professor of government and public administration at the University of Sydney.

[1] Sir Phillip Whistler Street, 'The Institute of Public Administration, Inaugural Meeting', *Australian Journal of Public Administration* (June 1938).

Described as a reserved academic, his real talent, it was said, lay in his *"astute evaluation and synthesis"*[2] of public administration, which, as this audience well knows, can never be completely divorced from politics.

5. This Oration, together with the Garran Oration, has attracted renowned speakers who have been closely associated with public administration. They have included former Prime Minister Bob Hawke who gave the 1988 Garran Oration. The Spann Oration has been delivered, amongst others, by former Premier of New South Wales, Nick Greiner; Sir Michael Barber, senior civil servant in Tony Blair's government; Lord Gus O'Donnell, who delivered London's successful 2012 Olympics; and Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, who brought dignity, insight and intelligence to the pressing issues faced by Indigenous Australians.

6. I find myself in a different position. I have neither been an administrator nor a public servant. However, as a judge and now Governor, I do not hold the role as an individual. Rather, in each case, the role is the institution, in the sense that both are defined and confined by constitutional and other restraints. It may not surprise you therefore that I have chosen for this oration to speak on the subject of: *Institutions*.

7. To lay the groundwork, as any lawyer would do, I propose to start first with a question and then follow it up with a definition. My question is simple: 'Name an Institution'?

8. One possible answer is 'democracy' – an abstract concept but with real world implications. More tangible responses are likely to include the Parliament, the Courts, perhaps Universities. Interestingly, when we think of those institutions, our minds go to a building, a place where the work of these institutions is carried out.

9. Another response is to consider smaller entities – for example, the defence force, the police, the health system, the education system, the public service – that is, those entities within a society which provide for the needs of its citizens.

[2] Australian Dictionary of Biography, Richard Neville Spann. See: here

10. Whatever response one has, institutions have in common that they act as *"humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interactions"*.[3] Andrew Haldane, former Director of the Bank of England, tells us that *"so defined, institutions have long been recognized as key ingredients of stability and growth"*.[4]

11. This is neither new nor startling. The 18th century economist Adam Smith saw institutions *"as a necessary foundation for progress"*.[5] As Haldane observed more than two centuries later, institutions provide the *"security of environment necessary to generate that progress – through the rule of law, and property and civil rights."*[6] Haldane was speaking of institutions in a democracy, which according to economist Daron Acemoglu, increases GDP per capita, on average, by 20%.[7]

12. Another description of institutions which has some appeal is *"the combination of modes of action with modes of thinking"*,[8] Whichever definition one wishes to adopt, theoreticians posit that institutions are of increasing importance as society and economies become more complex.[9]

13. Complexity in a modern world is multifaceted and multi causative, intensified by what some describe as an information overload now driven by Artificial Intelligence. It is sobering to consider the extent of the information explosion.

14. Where once we talked about the store of information in terms of books, we now talk in exabytes and zettabytes. Last year, the stock of information in the world was 149 zettabytes.[10] To physically store that on stacked CD's that would stretch to the moon and back hundreds of times over.[11] It is estimated that over 90% of the information available was new.

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[3] Andrew G Haldane, 'Why institutions matter (more than ever), Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC) Annual Conference, School of Oriental and African Studies, London (4 September 2013) p7 ("Haldane"). See: here
[4] Haldane, p7.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, 'The Role of Institutions in Growth and Development' Commission on Growth and Development, Working Paper No. 10 (The World Bank, 2008).
[8] João de Pina-Cabral, 'Afterword: What is an institution?' (2011) 19(4) *Social Anthropology* 477.
[9] Haldane.
[10] This is expected to grow to 181 zettabytes by the end of 2025. See: here
[11] "To store 295 exabytes on CD-ROMS would require a stack of discs reaching to the moon (238,900 miles, or 384,400 kilometers), and then a quarter of the distance from the Earth to the moon again". 1 zettabyte equals 1000 exabytes. See here

15. In 1978, Economist Herbert Simon won the Nobel Prize for his work on the impact of the explosion of information on corporate decision making.[12] His thesis was that an information surplus was likely to cause attention deficit; attention deficit in turn was likely to lower the quality of decision-making. Even worse, attention deficit, for cognitive psychologists, was rated as a cognitive disorder.

16. Haldane has questioned whether this is why the tenure of global CEO's has halved since 1995 and why the holding period for stocks has also halved since 1880 and ponders whether the modern world had moved into what he has described as a 'myopia trap' with the danger of undermining a foundational aspect of an institution as a *"knowledge holder"*.[13]

17. The expectation one has of an institution is very much shaped by one's perspective.

18. For the economist, prosperity and stability are the hallmarks of a well-functioning society, which requires the institutional framework to allow that to happen.

19. The institutional expectation of a public service, both from those within and those external to it, is to advance the public interest. A concept which is itself said to be *"complex and contestable"*.[14]

20. However, as Acemoglu points out, it is not sufficient merely to have institutions to carry out the functions that a society needs. It is necessary that the individuals responsible for delivering those needs have a set of shared professional norms.[15]

21. That is why, in every professional public service, there are a stated set of core values. In New South Wales, those core values are: integrity, trust, accountability and service.[16]

22. Missing from those core values, at least expressly, is 'impartiality'. This is something about which Spann had much to say:

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[12] https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/economic-sciences/1978/simon/facts/
[13] Haldane.
[14] Richard Mulgan, 'Public Servants and the Public Interest', Department of the Senate Occasion Lecture Series (Parliament, 11 August 2000).
[15] A Kanani & M Larizza, 'Institutions matter for growth and prosperity, today more than ever' (World Bank Blogs, 13 April 2021). See: here
[16] https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/culture-and-inclusion/workplace-culture

"The whole system" he said *"would break down if a permanent head were asked to be neutral as between the government and the opposition. The impartiality of the public service lies in its loyal support of the particular party in power…this loyalty must mean more than giving good advice when asked and following instructions when received. A permanent head has a duty to promote and protect the minister's and the government's interests just as he would if they were wholly acceptable to him personally".*[17]

23. Sir Gus O'Donnell, who delivered the 2014 Spann Oration, similarly observed that *"one of the key objectives of the public service is to help the government achieve its objectives".*

24. Economist Michael Keating posited that the key factor in impartiality *"was whether a public servant could transfer that allegiance when the minister or Government changed".*[18]

25. For Keating this raised the question of the public servant's role in acting in the public interest. He saw as a strength of our democracy that *"unelected officials do not have an unspecified power to determine what is in the public interest".* However, over-enthusiastic adoption of a minister's policy might blunt the public servant's ability to give dispassionate advice. The answer, as he saw it, lay in *"the ethics of policy advising"* which required of the public servant to ensure that the minister was fully informed.[19]

26. This is important given that there is a conventional view in the world of political science that *"most politicians are amateurs when it comes to policymaking".* The 'value' of the public service is that they have the institutional knowledge, (something which I have already mentioned) experience and understanding of the *"processes of governing".*[20]

27. Knowledge, experience and processes are interrelated concepts. A store of knowledge is necessary to ensure stability and continuity. Experience underwrites

[17] Spann 1976: 228, cited in Michael Keating, "The public service: Independence, responsibility and responsiveness', (1999) 58(1) *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 39 ("Keating").
[18] Keating.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Keating; and B Guy Peters & Jon Pierre. 'Politicisation of the public service during democratic backsliding: Alternative perspectives', (2022) 81(4) *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 629.

good decision making – drawing on knowledge of what went before, knowing what worked, what ought to be discarded and having the judgement to determine what processes are required for implementation.

28. Indeed, for institutions to be adaptive and agile to changing circumstances, without losing their stability and continuity, it has been suggested that an understanding of the underlying processes by which they function best facilitates change or development.

29. The processes of institutions are significant for another reason – if the processes do not work, the institution does not function, or at least function as it should. A failure of process opens the door to maladministration at best, and illegality and corruption at worse.

30. With that background, I propose to consider the interplay between institutions. My purpose in doing so is to make this point: it is important that institutions understand the limits of their powers and respect the limits of others.

31. Taking up the recent exhortation – or more correctly the admonition – of the Chief Justice of the High Court that judges should stick to their knitting, I propose to consider this topic by reference to the relationship between the Parliament and the Judiciary, the first and third arms of government both of which are underpinned by the rule of law. As Haldane observed, the rule of law is integral to enabling institutions to provide the secure environment in which change, and development can occur.

32. The rule of law derives from 1215 with the signing of the Magna Carta, establishing the fundamental principle that all people, including the king, have rights and responsibilities under the law. In 1883, the famed legal philosopher A V Dicey described the rule of law as having 3 essential elements:[21]

- First: that no person shall be punishable except for a distinct breach of the law as judged by the ordinary courts of the land.

[21] A V Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution* (1883, Macmillan & Co).

- Second: that no person is above the law and every person, regardless of rank or title, is subject to the ordinary law of the land and amenable to the ordinary jurisdiction of the courts.
- Third: the rights of individuals such as personal liberty or freedom of association are determined on a case-by-case basis by the courts having regard to the evidence adduced.

33. The 3 limbs are interrelated and act as a restraint on the exercise of arbitrary power.

34. There became a tendency to express, as a matter of principle, the rule of law by reference to its application in various different situations. This annoyed the great Lord Bingham. His concern was that this central tenet of democracy was in danger of becoming *"meaningless verbiage, the jurisprudential equivalent of motherhood and apple pie."*[22]

35. Unless the difference between the statement of principle and its application is understood, there is a risk that the principle itself will be lost. As to its application to *"[m]inisters and public officers at all levels,"* Lord Bingham said that the principle required that they *"exercise the powers conferred on them reasonably, in good faith, for the purpose for which the powers were conferred, and without exceeding the limits of such powers".*

36. It is no mere truism to say that the rule of law underpins the institutional integrity of each of the 3 arms of government. There are occasions, however, when one or other of the 3 branches strays into the territory of the other or contests the boundaries of that territory. As a matter of public administration, it is essential that the boundaries are understood. This was illustrated in 3 cases where the sovereignty of Parliament over its processes was contested.

37. Lawyers in the room will remember the notorious case of *Fitzpatrick and Browne*.[23] Fitzpatrick was a newspaper proprietor, colourfully known as a *"1950's style*

[22] Lord Bingham, "The Rule of Law" (2007) 66 *Cambridge Law Journal* 67 at 81.
[23] *R v Richards; Ex parte Fitzpatrick and Browne* [1955] HCA 36; 92 CLR 157.

underbelly-gangster, the Mr Big of Bankstown".[24] Browne was an *"old style journalist,"* described as a *"ratbag of the highest order,"* violent and mentally unstable.

38. In 1955, Fitzpatrick and Browne were jailed for 3 months by the Federal Parliament for contempt of said Parliament for intimidating the local MP, Charlie Morgan. The intimidation, it was said, comprised allegations made by Browne in Fitzpatrick's newspaper that the Mr Morgan had engaged in a number of immigration rackets. Morgan contended the articles were intended to prevent him carrying out his Parliamentary duties. Personal and political animosity was at the heart of the case. The principal antagonists were exactly that – antagonist. It was also the time of the Labor Party split and the emergence of the DLP, and Jack Lang hovered in the background.

39. The case captivated the public and has continued to fascinate and appal lawyers and journalists alike. Journalist Gavin Souter, writing in 1989, said that the jailing *"was rather as if the House [of Representatives] had been annoyed by two blowflies, and used its new Mace to swat them"*.[25] In a more sedate assessment, constitutional lawyer Enid Campbell thought the case *"left a great deal to be desired"* pointing out that Parliament acted as *"judges in their own cause"*.[26]

40. *Fitzpatrick and Browne* is critical to an understanding of Parliamentary sovereignty. Parliamentary sovereignty derives from Art 9 the United Kingdom Bill of Rights of 1688: *"That the freedom of speech and debates* ***or proceedings*** *in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of Parliament."*[27] As the High Court explained, it *"is for the courts to judge the existence of a privilege in either House of Parliament a privilege, but given an undoubted privilege, it is for the House to judge of the occasion and the manner of its exercise"*.[28]

41. Despite the colour and movement that makes *Fitzpatrick and Browne* such an interesting episode in Australian political and legal history, Parliament's power to

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[24] Andrew Moore, Fitzpatrick and Browne after 60 years, Lecture delivered in the Senate Occasional Lecture Series, Parliament House Canberra, 29 May 2015. See: here
[25] Gavin Souter, *Acts of Parliament: A Narrative History of the Senate and the House of Representatives* (Melbourne University Press, 1989) at 431.
[26] Enid Campbell, *Parliamentary Privilege* (Federation Press, Sydney 2003).
[27] *Prebble v Television New Zealand Ltd* [1915] 1 AC 321 at 332.
[28] *R v Richards; ex parte Fitzpatrick and Browne* (1955) 92 CLR 157 at 162.

jail for contempt, which was the proceeding in Parliament in question, was undoubted, being enshrined in s 49 of the Constitution. The power is directed to protecting the institutional integrity of parliamentary processes, including by upholding the demarcation of the constitutional boundaries between the Parliament and the Judiciary.

42. Statutory changes were introduced by the *Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987* including a provision (s 6), that merely defamatory utterances (which was more likely the case in *Fitzpatrick and Browne*) or comments that are critical of Parliament do not attract the contempt power. NSW Parliament has no power to jail for contempt although Bills to do so were introduced in 1879 1901, 1911 and 1912.[29] We remain the only State parliament without the power to jail for contempt. It is likely that this was, in part at least, the motivation of Mr Eddie Obeid challenge to the Court's jurisdiction to deal with the criminal charge against him. If the power lay solely with the Parliament, a jail sentence would not loom over his head even if guilty of the offence.

43. To put this in context, *Fitzpatrick and Browne* contended that the Parliament had no power to deal with them and that it was for the Court to do so. Mr Obeid contended the opposite.

44. Mr Obeid, a former parliamentarian, was charged with the common law offence of misconducting himself in public office. He challenged the Court's jurisdiction to deal with the charge arguing that the power to do so lay solely with Parliament.

45. He also challenged that he held a public office, given that no such charge had ever been previously laid against a member of Parliament.

46. The charge was held to be justiciable. The Court held that even if the Parliament had power to discipline him for the alleged conduct, that did not oust the jurisdiction of the Court to deal with the criminal conduct of a member or former member.

47. Relevant for present purposes was the language used by the Court. Throughout two centuries of case law, the office of a member of Parliament had been described as an

[29] *Obeid v R* [2015] NSWCCA 309 at [13] ("Obeid").

"office of trust and confidence";[30] that *"a member of Parliament …was a public officer clothed with a public trust."*[31] Likewise, in the academic commentary there were myriad observations to the effect that salaries of members of Parliament were paid from public funds and that there was *"status, dignity, and responsibility attached to what was a public position"*.[32]

48. In finding against Mr Obeid, the Court said: *"[t]he level of trust [found essential in the early cases] is all the greater in the modern Parliament. It accords with the oaths or affirmations all members of the Legislative Council are required to take by s 12 of the Constitution"*.[33]

49. In the recently decided case of *Ward v Hoenig*[34], the Court of Appeal reaffirmed the principle in *Fitzpatrick and Browne* that it was for the Court to decide if a privilege existed, but it would not adjudicate on the manner of its exercise. Thus, the Court rejected Mr Ward's attempt to prohibit a proposed expulsion motion against him in the Parliament following his conviction for serious criminal offences. As the Court again emphasised, the Parliament has the powers that are *"reasonably necessary for the proper exercise of its functions"* including the power to expel a member.

50. This principle also has its obverse. The Parliament cannot impose on the Courts functions which are administrative in nature.

51. The principles to which I have referred are not mere arcane statements of the law. They *"exist for the purposes of maintaining the orderly exercise of the [Parliament's] functions and to protect the high standing of and public confidence in Parliament"*.[35] The language of *"trust, responsibility, status and dignity"* of those who hold public office is not lightly used by the Courts. These are serious epithets which unless observed, will erode the fabric of our institutions generally, not only of Parliament.

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[30] *R v Bembridge* (1783) 3 Dougl 327; 99 ER 679; 22 St Tr 1, per Lord Mansfield cited in *Obeid v R* [2015] NSWCCA 309 at [59].
[31] *R v White* (1875) 13 SCR (NSW) (L) 322 cited in *Obeid v R* [2015] NSWCCA 309 at [91].
[32] Zellick cited in *Obeid* at 123.
[33] *Obeid* at [124].
[34] *Ward v Hoenig* [2025] NSWCA 180 ("Ward").
[35] *Ward* at [58].

52. Recent surveys in this regard are sobering: the 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer showed trust in institutions, including in parliaments and elected governments, declined from 51%in 2024 to 49% in 2025. Even though the decline was only 2%, neither result is reassuring.

53. The second matter I wish to discuss in relation to institutions is the integrity and efficiency of processes – which is critical to the proper functioning of institutions.

54. In *Egan v Willis*[36], the Court reaffirmed that *"a power to order the production of state papers…is reasonably necessary for the proper exercise by the Legislative Council of its functions."* The High Court noted that Parliament's primary function was to pass laws but also observed:

> *"it also has important functions to question and criticise government on behalf of the people…[To] secure accountability of government activity is the very essence of responsible government.''*

55. Chief Justice Gleeson had observed in the Court of Appeal hearing that such scrutiny provides "*an essential safeguard against abuse of executive power.*"

56. In the later case of *Egan v Chadwick*[37], the Court held the Legislative Council's power extended to calling for documents over which a claim of privilege was made, with the exception of documents containing, or which would reveal, the actual deliberations of Cabinet.

57. With it being well established that papers from the Executive branch can be the subject of scrutiny, the next consideration relates to the extent of its use. In the 20 years following the *Egan* litigation, the Legislative Council issued a total of 220 orders for the production of papers – taken as an average, that is about 20 a year.

58. In the 4 years of the 57th Parliament, 493 orders for the production of documents were issued, an average of 123 a year. In this the 58th Parliament, since 9 May 2023, 131 orders have been issued. Recent calls have included documents relating to the

[36] *Egan v Willis* [1998] HCA 71.
[37] *Egan v Chadwick & Ors* (unreported, NSW CA 10 June 1999).

Workers Compensation legislation, the Albury Hospital redevelopment, employment records of Ivan Milat and the greyhound racing industry. I make no particular comment about the frequency with which calls are made. However, questions of parliamentary and executive government efficiency undoubtedly arise, both in the calls for papers and in the manner of response. Some of the issues that do arise have been discussed by the Independent Legal Arbiter, the Honourable Keith Mason.

59. Moving away from Parliamentary processes, Robodebt is the exemplar of a failure of processes within the administration of government.

60. Again, the general facts will be known to you, although some detail is necessary to demonstrate the scale of what can only be described as a scandal. Over 5 years, 794,000 false and unlawful debts were raised by the Department of Human Services against over half a million individuals.[38] The debt recovery computer program used to affect the debt recovery has been described as *"laughably mathematically illiterate"*.[39]

61. The computer program assumed that all social security recipients had stable fortnightly earnings, the amount of which was based on a welfare recipient's annual tax returns. That assumption was correct for only 7% of recipients, as the Department knew.

62. The only legal recourse open to a recipient to challenge the debt recovery was by bringing an application in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). Only 0.05% of recipients brought such proceedings. To bring legal proceedings is a challenge for anyone. Here, those targeted were welfare recipients, typically a financially under-resourced and vulnerable group. The AAT invalidated 220 of the Robodebt claims. In what has been described as 'gaming' the system, the Department did not appeal any of the findings against it, knowing that if it did so would have exposed the invalidity of its process.[40]

63. The Australian Public Service Commissioner's Centralised Code of Conduct Inquiry into Robodebt found that 12 public servants had breached the Code of Conduct 97

[38] Emeritus Professor Terry Carney, 'Unravelling Robodebt: Legal Failures. Impact on Vulnerable Communities and Future Reforms' (2003), Sydney University website ("Carney"). See here: here
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

times of which 25 breaches were committed by two of the Secretaries. Seven breaches involved giving false and misleading information.[41] One criticism that came out of the inquiry was that information was siloed so that groups working on different aspects of the scheme were ignorant of how other aspects were being applied.

64. The critical failure in Robodebt was that those devising and implementing the scheme did not ask two fundamental questions: 'can we?' (that is, is it legal?) and 'should we?' (is it ethical / the right thing to do?). The inquiry concluded that *"at critical points … neither of these questions was properly examined or satisfactorily answered"*. There was other evidence to the effect that legal advice was ignored.[42] In truth, what had occurred was not only maladministration, there was a failure of the model litigant policy and with the scheme being illegal, the public servants involved had not observed the rule of law.

65. Following the Inquiry, the Australian Public Service Commissioner reminded the Australian Public Service (APS) that: *"It is not open to a public servant to manufacture contrivances, to selectively choose evidence to justify a line of action or to simply turn away …to say 'but I wasn't told' does not cut. Curiosity should be a default setting for public servants"*. Whilst acknowledging that mistakes are made, the problem, as the Commissioner said, *"lies in hiding or not acknowledging a mistake"*.[43] I would add that to do so is itself likely to be unethical. It certainly was in the case of Robodebt.

66. That last observation raises issues of leadership. Good leadership promotes a culture where mistakes can be raised so that they can be corrected. That was not the culture that pervaded the section of the Department tasked with the debt recovery that became Robodebt. Rather, as found by the Commissioner, the Secretary *"created and allowed a culture that prevented issues about the Scheme from being properly considered"*, including *"aggressive and abusive behaviour by a Deputy Secretary and express directions to staff not to consult or collaborate with others who had a direct interest in …the accuracy of [the legal advice as to the unlawfulness of the scheme]"*.

[41] Australian Public Service Commission, Centralised Code of Conduct Inquiry Taskforce Final Report, Inquiry Outcomes, see: here
[42] Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme, Final Report, xxv.
[43] Statement by the Australian Public Service Commissioner on the Robodebt Centralised Code of Conduct Inquiry. See here

67. How could this have happened? The APS Commissioner sheeted this failure directly to the *"shameful conduct"* of the public servants responsible: *"The Robodebt scheme saw members of the public service lose their grounding, feel under pressure from Ministers and senior officials and caught up in busyness and self-absorption."*

68. Simply put, the public officials *"lost sight of their obligations to serve the public interest."*[44]

69. In conclusion, let me summarise.

- First, Institutions are the means by which political, economic and social interactions are governed. Without institutions, civil society could not function. Unless the nature and function of institutions is understood and respected, civil society, and therefore democracy, at best will be fragile, and at worst will crumble. In what are consistently referred to as uncertain times, such an observation is not alarmist.

- Second: the stability of institutions is underpinned by the integrity processes which enable institutions to function. These processes likewise have to be understood and respected.

- Third: The essential underpinning of both institutions, and the processes of institutions, is the rule of law. You will remember its 3 tenets: all people are equal before the law; nobody is above the law; and the rights and liabilities of people are determined by the Courts such that there shall be no arbitrary punishment.

- Fourth: institutions must understand their own boundaries and respect the boundaries of others.

- Fifth: those tasked with the processes of institutions must ensure that they are legal, efficient, and carried out honestly and ethically. They must not become so unwieldy that they cannot adapt. But to lose their status as a 'knowledge holder' can equally undermine their efficiency and effectiveness.

[44] Chiraag Shah, 'Australia's Robodebt scheme: A tragic case of public policy failure,' VOICES, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford (26 July 2023). See: here

- Sixth, institutions and its processes must serve the public interest

70. Those pillars, I suggest, underpin trust in institutions. It is not surprising therefore that the more an entity is seen to directly support the community the higher the level of trust. The recent OECD Report on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions[45] supports this.

71. For NGO's, the police and the health system, levels of trust are high at around 70%. Media and social media, despite their influence, fare the worst at about 25% and 10% respectively. Trust in government, which is probably translated as trust in politicians, is low, although running about 10% points above the OCED average.

72. Reassuredly, the trust in the public service is high – in NSW at around 76% and in the Australian public service at about 70%. Importantly, what these surveys reveal is that the level of trust depends on how people are treated.

ENDS

[45] OECD, 'Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions in Australia' (2025).