

Enhancing ethical awareness in the APS



Australian Government
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VODCAST 5: A Fine Pair

Simon Carter – EL1 Technical Development (North)

I am a technical manager in the organisation, I suppose considered a bit of an expert in the area in which I work and, you know, I enjoy the work that I do. I think I've worked hard I think to get to the position I am in within the organisation now. But I do think that you have to be respectful of others in the workplace. We work in an environment that is driven by deadlines and driven by outcomes, and sometimes that can make some managers just a bit pushy when it comes to other people.

Chris Maddon – EL1 technical Development (South)

I am pretty straight forward in the way I communicate and I let people know what I think and I expect them to let me know what they think as well. I've got the technical skills and I think my work shows that, I get the job done. Sure sometimes language gets a bit strong round here, but that's just the way things are, it relieves a lot of tension and gets people back on the job faster than if we just sort of messed around with these kind of indirect kind of messages. It's the kind of language you'll hear in the street, it's the kind of language you will hear on TV and I think that once it's out there let's just move on. I don't mean anything by it, I don't mean to insult anyone, but I think these people, people like Simon, they're just a bit too soft.

Simon

I speak up when I think some managers have taken things a bit too far. I think I have to—it's my responsibility to do so and you know, quite honestly, some of the things that Chris says (pause), they really aren't appropriate in the workplace. It bugs me and I have told him so when I think he has taken things a bit too far. But it is really hard you know, to know what to do.

Brett Robinson – EL2 Director, Technical Development

Both Chris and Simon are valuable members of my team. Their technical knowledge is very good and they're both very good supervisors in their own way. But they've got very different styles of communicating and very different styles of working. Quite frankly they tend to wind each other up though and if they are in the same room, you can cut the atmosphere with a knife. I've had a quiet word to both of them a few times and I have tried a few different things but neither of them actually thinks that there is anything wrong with their behaviour. It is starting to affect the rest of the team.

Chris

I have always been a pretty plan speaker, pretty direct. I like people to be direct as well, you know if they're going to use strong language let them use it, I can take it on board. If they think I am wrong, I'll take it on board. It is very important in this line of work, it's very risky work, that you have got to speak up and speak your mind. There is no point to beating around the bush. You know the APS, I think it should, it encourages diversity and it should accept diversity in the way people manage things and the way people get things done. Sure I am probably a little bit strong in my views and the way I go about things, but you have got to accept that as well.

Simon

Look, don't get me wrong I am not saying that, you know, different management styles are wrong, it is just the way that Chris talks to me and to other staff. He's pushy, he's aggressive and frankly he is downright rude. He pushes my buttons anyway and sometimes I just bite back. He doesn't do anything to sort of encourage a culture which supports people with different perspectives and different backgrounds he just, he just encourages a blokey culture.

Brett

I recognise that we need diversity in the workplace, but as a manager I need everyone to be working together, so that we can achieve our results. We've got some important deadlines coming up and the only way we are going to meet those as a team is if Chris and Simon put aside their issues and start working together rather than bickering and fighting. But how do I get them to put those issues or differences aside for the good of the work?

Simon

I mean, Chris' staff they don't complain. I mean the ones that don't like it they just leave. One of them works for me now and you know frankly she is glad that she has now moved over to my team and you know we talk about the situation at our team meetings but, to be honest I am sick of it, I am sick of his behaviour. It's disrespectful and I am going to lodge a complaint, you know someone has got to do something, it's just ridiculous.