



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Immigration and Citizenship**

**Opening Address**  
**Tenth National EXPAND Conference**

**Mr Andrew Metcalfe**  
**Secretary**  
**Department of Immigration and Citizenship**  
**Patron of EXPAND**

**Canberra**  
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Ladies and gentlemen, as Patron of EXPAND, it is my pleasure and privilege to open EXPAND's tenth national conference here in Canberra today.

Before I begin, I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on today, the Ngunnawal people. I wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this region. I would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

I'm very happy to be here this morning, at the beginning of what will no doubt be a very interesting day for you all. Today is part of your ongoing professional development and will enable you to share your experiences with others working in similar roles. I strongly encourage you to make the most of today, and to engage actively throughout the day.

EXPAND continues to develop and grow and now includes a regular program of workshops and development opportunities. This, of course, does not happen by itself. It takes the efforts of all members and their ongoing commitment, and for this I commend you.

I'd like to particularly congratulate our Chair, Lyndie Mitchell, and her Executive Committee for their ongoing efforts to expand EXPAND!

Well, it certainly has been a busy few weeks! I'm sure you have all seen the media this week in relation to my portfolio, and the recent High Court injunction. As you can imagine, these are very challenging times for a number of us directly involved in these complex issues.

However, without the support provided to me and others by Executive Assistants, it is doubtful that I would be able to operate as effectively as I do.

For me, the EA/PA role is about the 'three Ts'. These are:

- teamwork
- trust, and
- tenacity.

To be successful in an EA/PA role, teamwork is essential. The first part of teamwork is between the SES and the EA/PA – this is absolutely essential and on many issues needs to be a 'two-way street'. It is a relationship that is, and needs to be, mutually beneficial.

But the teamwork also needs to extend to the broader network of EA/PAs, or other staff, who should work together towards shared outcomes. This may include colleagues within your group, division, or branch, and also extends across agencies in the public service. With this teamwork comes improved cooperation, better outcomes, and continual improvements to the delivery of government services.

The second 'T' is trust. For a team to operate effectively, even if that is a team of two people, there has to be trust. Without it the team, and relationship will fail. An SES officer needs to be able to trust his support staff, and the support staff need to be able to trust their SES and know that they are part of the team. It is something that is built, and worked on, and forged through shared experiences.

The third 'T' is tenacity. Often times an EA/PA is called upon to provide support with limited supervision, to follow things through, to ensure that the requirements of the SES are met. I'm fully aware that this often involves a high level of perseverance and good communication. An EA/PA should be proactive, not just reactive, and the best way to do this is through a tenacious attitude to 'get the job done'.

Of course, there is a fourth 'T' that I didn't mention...and that is 'Twit'. As a confidant of an SES officer, I strongly encourage you to provide feedback discreetly to the officer you are supporting, and if required tell them when they are being a twit! Constructive feedback is always welcome!

Speaking of receiving frank feedback, I would like to introduce some key people from my Executive Team, whose frank feedback I value and without whom my life as a Secretary would be much more difficult.

Kim Nadurak has been my Executive Assistant for nine years, having joined my team when I was Deputy Secretary in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and then transferred with me when I became Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in 2005.

My Executive Officer, Nick Evans, who was unable to attend this morning, has been with me since February this year. As I noted last year, I rotate my Executive Officers every year or so. This provides some able EL1s or EL2s the opportunity to get a closer look at aspects of senior leadership.

The roles of my EA and my EO are crucial in the management of my office. While commonly the roles are very different, they are complementary to each other. Without one the other is less effective, and so it is essential that the people in these roles work together, communicate well, and are on the same 'team'.

I am pleased to say that Kim and Nick do this very well, despite the enormous work pressures they are under from me, from various areas within the department and also externally.

I'm pleased that there are also some other members of my department's broader executive team here today. These EA/PAs all support our leadership team, and each other, in a busy and high-pressure environment. We are very fortunate to have such dedicated individuals working with us, and I appreciate what they do very much.

Often, this broader group needs to work together effectively to achieve results. For example, with 78 offices globally, I am required to travel regularly and when I do the support provided by our EA/PA and EO networks is invaluable.

They ensure that I am where I need to be, when I need to be there, and that I have the information I need to have...and they do this seamlessly. This involves a degree of trust and tenacity, but most of all it involves teamwork.

I'm sure that this scenario is familiar to many of you, and that is why it is good to step away, (occasionally!) from these hectic roles to reflect on what you do well, what could improve, and how you can continue to develop your skills and performance. Opportunities such as this conference are a great chance to do this, especially considering the highly relevant program that has been developed for today.

We have some terrific guest speakers here today. These include Peter Fitzsimons, Trish Bergin, Dr John Ticknell, and the gadget guy Peter Blasina. I'm sure you will get a lot out of each of the speaker's presentations. All discussing highly relevant topics that will provide you with some ideas to take back into your workplaces.

There will also be a panel discussion in the middle of the day. I'm very happy to see that my department's Keryn Roberts and Timothy Crispian will be on the panel today which will be discussing performance reviews.

Of course many of you will recall that Keryn won the PA of the year in the APS2-5 category last year. The panel discussion topic will be interesting for Keryn, as there have been unconfirmed reports that she would place her EXPAND trophy on the desk during each of her performance discussions over the last year – no doubt a major bargaining chip! Despite her best efforts to keep the trophy, we managed to retrieve it from her recently and it will be awarded to a new winner this evening.

I'm sure the program today will be interesting and thought provoking and, as I have said, I encourage you to actively engage throughout the course of the day. Most importantly have a great time, and I look forward to speaking with you further at our dinner and awards ceremony tonight, where we can all relax, and we will have the pleasure of recognising our EAs and PAs of the year.

Oh, and before I finish, I forgot to mention the fifth 'T'. This is one that Kim and I adhere to very closely, and that is the principle that everything can be solved over a good cup of tea!

Thank you.