

Editorial

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Australia has a federal system of government and the organisation, control, financing and delivery of public and not-for-profit services is complex partly due to the levels of government involved. The Commonwealth (Federal) government has responsibility for the funding, control and direct delivery of some public services such as defence and social security while state governments have responsibility for the delivery of a range of other public services such as schools and healthcare. Some of the funding and hence control of these state services also comes from the Commonwealth government through a complicated system of grants and programmes. An active local government system provides some social and welfare services at local level and an extensive not for profit sector largely made up of charities and religious groups such as the Salvation Army and the Brotherhood of St. Laurence also provide a range of welfare services. Australia also has a strong voluntary and self-help tradition which has seen the development of agencies such as not for profit credit unions and non-government international agencies such as Care Australia and World Vision.

During the early 1990s, Australian government policies at both state and federal level were shaped by the rising influence internationally of neo-liberal approaches to policymaking. These included an increasing reliance on the use of market forces for the allocation of resources, utilisation of corporate sector management models and a decreasing role for government (Alford and O'Neil, 1994). Consequently, the public sector has undergone significant change as federal and state governments have corporatised, privatised, outsourced, streamlined and reduced spending on public services. Following similar developments in Europe and the UK, we have also seen an increasing use of management innovations such as human resource management and specifically the use of performance management and an emphasis on greater accountability for the provision of services (Pollit, 1993; Rees and Rodley, 1995). These changes have had a direct impact on the management of staff within the sector and much of the research emerging out of this period examined the employment relations outcomes arguing that there was an increase in work intensification, job insecurity and workplace stress for employees (Rees and Rodley, 1995; Stanton *et al.*, 2005).

In the mid-2000s, we can certainly say that the public sector has been redefined – it is not only smaller but work is being carried out differently and the not for profit welfare sector has increasing importance (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2005). The response to our call for papers in 2005 has emphasised these points. A series of 12 papers have emerged that focus not only on the outcomes of neoliberalism but also on the new challenges and dynamics facing the Australian public and not for profit sector and the increasing complexity of this area. Papers have emerged that study education, defence, welfare and government services, the health sector and even credit unions and international non-government organisations.

The first four papers from the education sector each explore a different dimension of the impact of change on the workforce. The first paper by Burchielli, on work intensification in teaching, explores the case of an Australian primary school operating with an economically depressed and largely refugee student body. The author argues that the work intensity of the teachers and School Management has risen partly as a result of the standardised state government funding formulae which inadequately fund teacher and student learning requirements. The demographic of the student body and large number of students with learning difficulties has also impacted heavily on teacher workloads. Burchielli suggests that this leads to increasing levels of work related stress and impacts on work and family balance. The second paper by Shacklock focuses on the tertiary education sector and explores the challenge of an aging university population. Shacklock found that despite government policies encouraging older workers to continue working later in life, many older university workers did not wish to remain in the university workforce. Those that were more likely to want to continue working past the age of 65 years rated working conditions as very important in their lives relative to those that did not. They were more likely to be satisfied with their work and family life balance, they found satisfaction, challenge or achievement from working and had higher levels of autonomy, flexibility and variety at work. These two papers send out a strong message about the importance of the quality of working life if we are to keep skilled professionals in the education workforce. The third paper in the education sector by Morris also focuses on universities and asks whether performance appraisal is actually suited to the rarified world of academics and the principles of academic freedom. Morris poses the question as to whether the purpose of performance appraisal in academia is one of development or one of supervision and control. If it is one of development then

performance appraisal could perhaps add value to the quality of working life of university staff. If it is one of control, learning the lessons of the previous two papers, employees can become resentful and disengaged. The final education paper by Tattersall explores education from an entirely different perspective by focusing on the teachers federation and their community unionism campaign. The paper demonstrates how teachers are attempting to engage with and appeal to consumers who are anxious for better quality of service delivery.

The next paper by Thomas focuses on human resource development and explores leadership training for officers in the Australian Defence Forces. This is an interesting paper in an under researched area that argues that there is an underlying tension in the educational process within the Defence Force. The paper suggests that the traditional training approach by the military which places an emphasis on imitation is unsuited to longer term learning and development outcomes necessary in a contemporary operational environment. The study finds the dominant influence is of a command and managerial compliance style in teaching practices and evaluation of officers rather than contingent and creative styles of leadership necessary for 21st century military operations.

The paper by Kong and Thomson also focuses on human resource development and explores the relationships between intellectual capital and SHRM through a series of in-depth interviews with senior management executives in social service non-profit organisations in Australia. Intellectual capital is argued to be a beneficial conceptual framework to enhance the effectiveness, in particular SHRM of social service non-profit organisations. This paper is innovative in that it fuses two disparate theoretical approaches and applies them in an often neglected area.

The next four papers focus on the way work is undertaken in a range of public sector and not-for-profit settings. The paper by Brunetto and Farr-Wharton examines organisational relationships between supervisors and nurses in the health sector using a social capital theoretical framework. The authors argue that the quality of relationships between nurses and management not only impacts on the well-being of the nurses themselves but also affects longer-term organisational effectiveness by affecting productivity and turnover rates. The implication for senior hospital management attempting to ensure long-term organisational effectiveness is that nurses' satisfaction with supervisory communication is crucial as communication moderates nurses' perception of other organisational factors, which in turn, affect job satisfaction and job commitment. In a time of international shortages in the nursing labour force and increasing costs in the health sector, this paper provides an important contribution.

The next paper by Cutcher explores shifting customer and employee relations in the Australian credit union movement. The paper highlights how changing conceptualisations of the 'customer' and increasing private sector practises impact on HRM policies. An increasing emphasis on efficiency and accountability has consequences for employees in terms of their identity and commitment to the organisation. This has led to greater levels of employee stress and resistance and affected the employees' ability to deliver of high levels of customer care thus undermining commitment to the organisation. The paper by Albrecht using structural equation modelling further develops the theme of organisational commitment. He examines predictors of extra-role behaviour, turnover and organisational citizen behaviour in the public sector. Using an integrated social exchange related theory of extra-role behaviours, Albrecht argues that job autonomy, procedural fairness, job satisfaction, trust in management and high-level organisational

support provide enabling conditions for employees in the public sector sample to experience affective commitment, to engage in prosocial behaviours and to be more likely to remain with their organisation.

Another interesting paper on the public sector by Anderson *et al.* explores the use of call centres and argue that the traditional criticisms of call centres (*e.g.*, electronic sweatshops) are not evidenced in this study. The authors suggest that the call centres studied are best characterised as customer-orientated bureaucracies. The authors make important distinctions between private and public sector call centres suggesting that call centres in the public sector focus on accuracy, unions are often present, conditions are relatively good, work is mainly permanent and there are opportunities for people from disadvantaged groups and career development is available.

Finally, we come to two quite different papers. The first focuses by Shacklock on ethics of HRM practitioners in the public sector arguing that the Australian public sector has undergone significant changes involving privatisation, devolution and downsizing and that this raises ethical challenges for human resource management practitioners especially where their own professional values and organisational expediency come into conflict. This research is undertaken in three Australian public sector jurisdictions and investigated Senior Human Resource Management practitioners ethical decision-making and choices they are likely to make when confronting specific ethical dilemmas. The research confirms the increasing frequency and complexity of morally hazardous situations in HR roles in the public sector. The second paper by Merlot *et al.* takes us outside of Australia to explore Strategic International Human Resource Management (SIHRM) in international non-government organisations. Despite this sector's increasing importance in Australia and throughout the world this area has been overlooked by management scholars. Merlot *et al.* contribute to the dearth of literature by proposing a theoretical framework of strategic international HRM for INGOs and offer a series of propositions specific to the development of SIHRM in INGOs. This research merges literature in international management, non-profit sector management and SIHRM in order to improve our understanding of the role SIHRM plays in the performance of INGOs.

This special issue of the *International Journal of Human Resource Development and Management* demonstrates the continued importance of the public sector and the emerging importance of non-government organisations and not-for profit organisations within an Australian context. Some common themes that have emerged include the impact of private sector management strategies and techniques such as HRM, accountability, performance and customer service. The impact of these practices on employees has varied and there is clear evidence of an affect on employee commitment, job satisfaction, retention and turnover. However, these affects have not been uniform which demonstrates the complexity and diversity of this sector. The 12 papers demonstrate a fertile ground for academic research as well as new dynamics and new challenges for governments, management practitioners, and employees in non-private sector contexts.

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