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Cost effective, accountable and innovative public services – beyond Croke Park.

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An effective public service has a critical role to play in restoring economic growth and in transforming society. Reform is urgent.

The cost and effectiveness of the public service have major impacts on the competitiveness of Irish exporters and they provide essential infrastructures (including education) which are essential for business. But their importance transcends economic efficiency. Their activities and objectives serve vital public purposes and are essential to any civilised and decent society. The quality of public services, whether good or bad, tell us a lot about ourselves.

Confidence in the public service has gone down. There is a widespread view that the public service is not an instrument fit for purpose, notwithstanding a reasonably favourable external review from the OECD².

Perceived shortcomings are considerable. Criticisms include deficits in accountability, recruitment, lack of responsiveness, incompetence, politicisation, being inward looking, smug, unproductive, having antiquated and restrictive work practices, resistance to change and indifference to service delivery standards and costs.

Some of these perceptions are unfair across the board. There are examples of excellent public service activity and some areas, individual and groups of public servants do their best under difficult conditions. But there are also areas where public service performance has not met reasonable expectations.

There has been a considerable amount of serious thought about public service reform in this country. We have had the 2008 OECD Report, the Report of the Task Force on the Public Service³,

¹ **Disclaimer:** Except where otherwise attributed, the views and opinions expressed in this paper are my own and should not be attributed to any of the organisations with which I am associated including the National Competitiveness Council.

² OECD Public Management Reviews, Ireland 'Towards an Integrated Public Service', 2008 (http://www.oecd.org/document/31/0,3343,en_2649_33735_40529119_1_1_1_1.00.html)

³ Public Service Agreement 2010-2014; http://www.onegov.ie/eng/Publications/Transforming_Public_Services_Report.pdf

the Government Statement on Transforming Public Services⁴ and the Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes (An Bord Snip)⁵ – but the perceived structural impact on reforming public service processes and structures has to date has been limited. Hopefully, the ratification and subsequent implementation of the “Croke Park Agreement”⁶ will hopefully bring about significant structural change in areas where completion of the reform agenda is long overdue – these include embedding merit based promotion and open recruitment at all levels.

The Croke Park agreement will require commitment from all the parties to it. Leadership commitment from politicians, management and trade unions is necessary but will not be sufficient. Additional internal drivers of change and innovation are also needed. Major step changes are needed. We need to accept that improving productivity is essential for economic survival. There should not be any more trading off of pay increases for promises of increased productivity – which, in turn, requires transparently fair systems for pay settlement and excellent HR practices. And, there should be zero tolerance for restrictive practices and proportionate sanctions and rewards.

Why is reform and promoting change so difficult?

Concepts of service, organisation and accountability have been diminished and have undermined as sense of noble purpose across the public services. The impression developed by the “decentralisation programme” that the civil service was a plaything of populist requirements was a case in point. Cultures of “possession” are often stronger in organisations than cultures of performance and innovation. And there are often inappropriate views of costs and value for money – too often securing more funding for a service or department appears to be an end in itself – or poorly linked to improved performance.

In contrast with the private sector, unsuccessful public service organisations do not go out of business – or do so very slowly. In summary, essential drivers of change and innovation are missing.

Transforming enablers are needed

The transforming enablers needed are:

1. Introducing **contestability** and **choice** into programme delivery and design
2. Being clear about and strengthening accountability
3. Renewing the Noble Purpose of the Public Service

These are mutually reinforcing.

⁴ http://www.onegov.ie/eng/Publications/Government_Statement_on_TPS.pdf

⁵ See [Report of Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes Vols 1 and 2](#) at www.finance.gov.ie

⁶ Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 see http://www.onegov.ie/eng/Publications/Draft_Public_Service_Agreement_2010_-_2014.pdf

These can be reflected in reforming legislation. The ways in which this can be done will vary across three main categories of public service

1. Service delivery
2. Policy advice and implementation
3. Regulation

The first transforming enabler: Contestability

Contestability in service delivery

Much of public service delivery functions as a monopoly supplier. The absence of effective competition makes improving performance more difficult and blunts the incentive for meeting customer or client needs. Essential drivers of change and innovation are missing. It may be significant that the IDA, which is one of our more successful public service organisations, and is an exemplar organisation internationally, operates in an intensively competitive external domain – and that there is also a high level of competition within the organisation between different project and programme teams.

We have historically tended to make the assumption that the delivery of public goods requires delivery by public service organisations. That need not be the case. The NCT test which is privately delivered is a case in point. It has not been a terrific experience but would a public service organisation do better? And the contractor has been replaced. But was there a compelling need (perhaps for scale) to grant a monopoly?

Introducing contestability may involve privatisation or outsourcing. But this need not always be the case. Indeed substituting a private sector monopoly for a public one is not a good idea.

Contestability works best when there is choice.

We already have dimensions of contestability in some areas of public service delivery – for example in education, where many parents have choice as to which school they send their children. There is also student choice at third level. Interestingly, in much of the education system funding follows the pupil and the student and, furthermore, in the case of the universities and the institutes of technology a significant part of the funding, particularly for research, has to be competed for. These elements of choice and contestability may explain why our educational outcomes are better than we would expect if expenditure were the sole determinant of success – which it clearly is not.

Contrast education with the health service where institutional budgeting (for example, hospitals bargaining over budgets with the HSE) is still an important feature. The introduction of systems where funding followed the user would, I believe, result in much improved health service delivery. If funding followed the user – hospitals and health providers would take a different view of citizens needing health service rather than at the moment approaching delivery with a rationing mind set.

The HSE could then become like the type of organisation the Higher Education Authority (HEA) tries to be – responsible for distributing public funding according to transparent rules and criteria and functioning as a moderator and strategic steering organisation rather than a programme provider. Interestingly, this is the approach reflected in the recommendations made in the recently Report of the Expert Group on Resource Allocation and Financing in the Health Sector (9 July 2010).⁷

The London Bus Service is an example of an interesting approach. The bus services are operated by a number of bus operating companies which work under contract to London Buses/ Transport for London (TfL). There is an integrated bus timetable and all buses adhere to the same fare structure and livery. What has been achieved in London is competition among operators for the market rather than on the routes.

Maybe in the future competing organisations might deliver the NCT test? Did we, for example, need to set up the National Roads Authority as an executive programme agency? Could the mandate for modernising our principal roads have been put out to tender to Irish and international organisations, both public and private, with large scale project management capacity (such as for example the ESB) with implementation subject to the oversight of the Department of Transport? If it had would the roads programme now be completed – and at lower cost? We also seemed to have lost the opportunity using the large scale motorway programme to lay down ducting for a national broadband fibre network. Would there have been a different dynamic if the entity managing the construction of the motorways had competed for the contract? A more entrepreneurial organisation is unlikely to have pursued the baffling policy pursued by the NRA in regard to the provision of laybys and motorway service areas along the motorways – the M7 and M8 motorway road journeys now present quite a challenge for families with young children!

Staying in the transport area, there is another potential approach to contestability which can be introduced at no cost to the Exchequer – and which would save money as well as improving service. I believe that, notwithstanding improvements, the poor quality of the bus service in Dublin (particularly its poor predictability) is one of the reasons which Dublin commuters use cars more than they do in other major international cities. The concept of customer service seems to be very low down in the hierarchy of values in Dublin Bus. Interestingly, where direct contestability has happened, in the case of the Aircoach Service to and from Dublin Airport, Dublin Bus was quick to respond with new dedicated Airport – City bus services.

The legal framework has now changed and there is an opportunity to bring about major change. The Public Transport Regulation Act, passed in 2009, established a National Transport Authority with the responsibility to license bus services.

Taking a novel view of the taxi services may also improve service quality at no cost to the Exchequer. The Minister and Department of Transport have shown commendable resolve in refusing to cap the number of taxi licences in the face of intense pressure from taxi owners. The logic of not capping

⁷ The report contains proposals for proposals to move to a system whereby hospital treatments would be funded on a mainly prospective, episode of care basis, as compared to the current historic block grants. See http://www.dohc.ie/publications/resource_allocation_financing_health_sector.html and presentations by Professors Frances Ruane and Charles Normond

supply is to allow a market to work and thereby to improve service and value to customers. This has been achieved. But the taxi drivers are suffering financially like many others during the recession— and have persisted with arguments for limiting entry. Arguably, the optimum response to their situation is not to restrict the market by capping the number of licences but to follow the market logic. The relaxation of restrictions on supply could be matched by relaxation of restrictions on the demand side. This could be achieved by altering the regulations to allow taxi drivers to look for business at bus stops by offering regulated reduced individual fares – in effect allowing passengers to share journey costs. This would of course pose new regulatory challenges but the potential benefits appear considerable. This approach could be applied on routes where it was most cost effective in improving services.

Contestability and competition are concepts which do not fit easily in our culture. Small societies lend themselves easily to what economists would describe as collusive behaviour – often disguised as purporting to facilitate more efficient provision. And in Ireland there may still, despite the economic changes of the 1990s and 2000s, be a muted “performance ethic” in our society as discussed by Professor JJ Lee in *“Ireland 1912-1985”*⁸. This combined with the apparent dominance in the Irish mind of a “possessor” as opposed to a “performance” mentality will pose a major challenge to introducing greater contestability into the provision of public services. But without this dimension the dynamic necessary to sustain the drive for reform will not gain sufficient momentum.

Contestability and policy advice

Contestability should be an essential underpinning of the relationship between Ministers and top civil servants. Ministers have a right to expect that the policy options and analyses put to them by the civil service are well researched and based on considerations of national (rather than sectional or local) interest. Civil servants are entitled to get a careful (and challenging) hearing and finally Ministers should have confidence that their lawful decisions and instructions will be implemented.

We also have other dimensions of contestability already in place in the policy domain. Aside from the political process where the Government of the day has to defend its policies in the Dáil and elsewhere, Government has established a large number of advisory bodies – which offers people with experience outside the Government service opportunities to offer advice and analysis. However, this does not meet a public desire for greater scrutiny of Government decisions.

Eddie Molloy raised serious questions about the advice on public policy is formulated and provided⁹. There are by and large no processes and structures by which Government responds to advisory bodies. Much of the focus is on the Department of Finance and the performance of its key role (in which we all have a vital interest) at the centre of Government.

Dan O’ Brien, citing an EU Commission study¹⁰ and other publications concluded *that “even without a review of the Department of Finance, we already know that we are near the bottom of the class in terms of best practice in national financial management”* He pointed to key failures in regard to

⁸ Cambridge University Press, 1989 – see for example page 528

⁹ See Irish Times, April 8 and 9, 2010

¹⁰ Irish Times, 28 June, 2010

having measures in place to insulate the public finances from crisis or to flash warning lights, the rejection by the Department in 2005 of an IMF suggestion for outside involvement in the Department's work and its apparent failure to strengthen its human resources capacity during the boom years. Perhaps most telling was his observation that Ireland's overall financial management arrangements were found by the EU study to be the most deficient of the 19 countries surveyed. *"Second from bottom came Greece. That was in 2007. The study turned out to have considerable predictive power. In 2009, Ireland had the largest budget deficit among the EU 27 and Greece the second largest"*.

Eddie Molloy's observation was equally powerful. He noted that while every other department was being subjected to an organisational review by the Department of An Taoiseach, the Department of Finance reviewed itself and concluded that *"the department is widely acknowledged to be a professional and effective organisation with dedicated and highly skilled staff"*.

Awareness of scrutiny improves outcomes.

The quality of the outputs of Government departments and agencies would be much enhanced by subjecting the Strategy and Output Statements published by Departments to independent and expert review and amendment before publication. A similar approach could apply in relation to budgetary policy with expert, independent review (with full access to information) prior to publication of the revenue and expenditure projections made by the Department of Finance which underpin fiscal policy. Structures of this type already exist in countries such as Sweden and the UK has recently gone down this road with the establishment of an Office for Budget Responsibility. The Government decision to ask the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance and the Public Service in its further work on the Regling and Watson reports to consider *"the case for the establishment of new institutional structures to provide an independent validation of economic and fiscal projections as well as for the introduction of domestic medium-term fiscal rules"* is encouraging.¹¹

Implementation should also be reviewed on a three or five year cycle. Essentially, the challenge is to construct a framework which would allow both the quality of advice offered to Ministers and subsequent operational implementation to be independently reviewed. An independent, expert and external review structure is needed. Some of the early stages of this process, including for example the ex- ante review of Strategy and Output Statements, would not be in the public domain but after a stated period the results of independent review should be published and Government, Ministers and Secretaries General would be required to respond to the Oireachtas within stated periods to these reviews by way of formal written communications outlining the actions they propose to take. This mechanism would ensure that these reports, or some of them at least, would be debated which would reduce the risk of reports being put on the shelves.

Contestability and regulation

Independent review processes are also essential in the regulation area. We now have a range of regulatory and compliance bodies operating in economic and social policy domains. In the economic arena, regulation is a second – best solution required to deal with market failures such as the existence of monopolies, imperfect competition or the need for consumer protection or in areas such as banking and finance and health where regulation will always be necessary.

¹¹ Department of Finance Press Release 7 July 2010. ; <http://www.finance.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=6374>

We are now acutely aware of the failures of the regulatory processes in banking and finance. Periodic and independent evaluation is needed as to how well and effectively the regulators are doing their jobs – and indeed, particularly in some economic areas, to ask the question have circumstances changed to such an extent that their mandates need to be changed or perhaps terminated? Also, is there a case for considering bringing together a number of the regulatory bodies – especially the smaller ones? Are we missing out on synergies?

The second transforming enabler: Clarity about accountability.

If we look across the service delivery areas of the public service we see, notwithstanding many positive examples, rigidities and demarcations, a perception that employee rights and privileges take precedence over quality of service delivery. We read statements and actions which convey a sense of justification and self regard among public service employees and others (such as medical professionals) as well as delivery failures and inefficiencies.

Accountability is an important foundation for ensuring better performance. It is the essential twin sister of contestability. Consequences do matter. In the public service the transmission mechanisms between policies, actions and consequences do not work satisfactorily. The challenge is to embed into the workings and structures of the public service appropriate responsibilities for performance and outcomes at both organisational and individual level.

There are two types of measures and incentives which support accountability - positive ones and negative ones.

When I joined the civil service in the 70s there was little by way of a relationship between incentives and accountability. In fact if anything the relationship was perverse because it encouraged caution and risk adverse behaviour. The promotion system was central to this. Then and now promotion is by far the most important positive incentive in the civil service. In the early 70s most promotion was by seniority. Ambitious civil servants ran the risk of being “passed over” if they made mistakes. The incentive was to keep the head down and to behave like the others. Promotion by seniority has been considerably eroded in the civil service and in public service organisations. Within the more senior to upper ranks in the civil service most promotional posts are now open to competition, Assistant Secretary posts are advertised publicly and more recently so are many Secretary General posts –the latter have been term appointments since the mid 1980s. Despite this the impact in terms of recruitment of people from outside the civil service has been negligible¹² There are also other areas of the public service, teaching being a prime example, where the impact of the seniority criterion is still very powerful, notwithstanding recent changes which will take some time to have effect.

As regards negative accountability, that there are few sanctions (except for financial fraud and theft and other illegal activities) at levels other than perhaps at Secretary General or head of agency.

¹² “*Civil Service hires own for all top jobs, bar one*”. Irish Times, May 1, 2010. Between 2005 and 2009, 82 competitions were held for top level appointments in the civil service. Only one person from outside the public service was appointed. During the same period 3 applicants from the wider public service were appointed.

Reflecting on my own time as a top manager (and I run the risk of being out of touch), my sense is that virtually all the management levers available to Secretaries General are on the soft side – transmitting motivation, the noble purpose of the domain we were working in, eliciting a sense of public service, the excitement of working close to Government and the possibility of exercising influence on important policy decisions. These are all necessary – but not sufficient – and possibly have maximum impact on the 20-30% of people working in the organisations who are most committed and ambitious and a hopefully a positive impact on a substantial additional cohort. But this is not enough.

Responsibilities, capacity, authority and consequences need to be explicitly linked and accompanied by robust a more robust accountability ethic and structures and with systems of fairly delivered , and proportionate, rewards and sanctions.

These changes will not only improve performance and service to the public but I also believe that they will have very positive impacts on morale and job satisfaction for people working in the public service by creating real devolution of authority and capacity.

Clear goals and responsibilities, having the capacity and authority to do the job assigned enhance our sense of self –worth and ultimately satisfaction and happiness. It is sad that many areas of the public service do not create conditions or environments which have these features. I have unfortunately come across too many public servants whose lives are characterised by what Thoreau described as “quiet desperation¹³” and whose outlook and working lives are diminished by cynicism and resentment. This is often reinforced by rigid and authoritarian hierarchical structures which themselves may be a product of uncertainty about responsibility - “if I am not clear about what I have to do, better refer it up”!

It is important though that these reforms be accompanied by changes in performance and review mechanisms and processes which are not only effective but also fair and equitable.

Distinguishing between political and managerial accountability

A root and branch reform of accountability and review structures will also provide an opportunity to address the urgent requirement of addressing the blurred distinctions between political and managerial accountability in the civil service.

We have a culture, both in politics and in public administration that Ministers are held to be politically accountable for operational delivery (usually failures). I can recall from my time I worked in the Department of Education and Science, Ministers being put through the hoops when there were operational failures (some serious) in the operations of the Leaving Certificate which at that time was managed directly by the Department. This was ridiculous. On the one hand Ministers could not be expected to be familiar and responsible for the administrative and management systems and the underlying and complex details and on the other the administration was trying to operate in a very politically charged environment. The resulting potential for grief was significant.

¹³ Henry David Thoreau 1818-1862; - *“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation....”*; “Economy” from “Walden”

The setting up of the State Examinations Commission was a major improvement. Operational failures, some worrying continue to occur, but the accountability framework is much improved.

The immediate lesson for me is that in operational service delivery areas both political and executive accountability are enhanced if we set up mission specific structures or organisations with clear and robust management and governance structures, with clear lines of reporting and clarity about roles and responsibilities in order to match responsibility, capacity and authority and accountability.

The existing arrangements particularly in the civil service do not meet these requirements. The main piece of framework legislation, the Public Service Management Act 1997, contains a provision which limits the management responsibility of a Secretary General for matters pertaining to appointments, performance, discipline and dismissals to staff below the level of Principal Officer. This situation confuses managerial and political accountability and should be changed.

Accountability within the wider public service

Within the wider public service (particularly the state agencies) the formal responsibilities appear clear – for example, in state bodies there is a line of accountability up to the chief executive and then to the board – and redesign should be less complex but again there appear to be significant shortcomings in performance review and evaluation which need to be addressed. .

The processes for making Board appointments to State bodies would benefit from review. At the moment these are largely decided by Ministers and the Government. It is necessary that Ministers should be able to appoint people to Boards in whom they have confidence. But Board members should be expected to contribute, through their experience and ability, to enhancing the performance of the agencies and bodies concerned. Some of us can recall situations where this test does not seem to have been applied or met. A first step is that all appointees to Boards should be informed of their responsibilities before their appointment and required to acknowledge their willingness to adhere to these requirements. A further step would be to develop a structured search and selection model which would allow potential Board members to make expressions of interest and subject them to a fitness for purpose review¹⁴. This need not involve elaborate and expensive advertising and interviewing – for example some of the design features of the nominations committee approach used in some organisations could be used.

An outline reform programme –first steps for a bold beginning!

1. Amend the Public Service Management Act

¹⁴ See [http://www.publicappts-vacs.gov.uk/\(jmqb3hunkxf5b145fndck045\)/Default.aspx](http://www.publicappts-vacs.gov.uk/(jmqb3hunkxf5b145fndck045)/Default.aspx)

- a. **Assign authority, accountability and responsibilities as CEO to Secretaries General of Government Departments**
 - b. **Establish legally meaningful systems of cascading assignment of managerial responsibilities in Government Departments and provide for proportionate rewards and sanctions**
 - c. **Provide for mandatory, independent and external expert and recurring (3-5 years) reviews of Departments and of their effectiveness; ensure that membership of review teams includes international experts**
 - d. **Require reviews to be published and laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas;**
 - e. **Require , as appropriate, Government, Ministers and Secretaries General to respond formally outlining the actions they propose to take in documents laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas within stated periods**
2. **Implement similar model for major State bodies and clusters of smaller bodies.**
 3. **Reform structures and procedures for management of the public finances – including establishing a statutory “fiscal council” type entity**
 4. **Adopt a systematic “contestability” programme for public service delivery – begin with two major areas – public transport and the health services?**
 - a. **National Transport Authority to review the road transport monopolies in the cities – particularly Dublin Bus; explore London model; provide structure for allowing taxis to actively seek business (redesignate bus stops as public transport stops) and fare structures for trip sharing**
 - b. **Implement recent Health Funding report. Refocus HSE from direct service provision to service funding. Put governance boards in all hospitals¹⁵. Remove budget funding – money should follow the patient.**

The third enabler: Renewing the Noble Purpose of the Public Service

Values are vital. Public service standards, including behaviours and service quality, are very important influencers and determinants of norms and standards in society – for better or for worse.

¹⁵ Dr Terry McWade of the RCSI in a study of governance arrangements in public hospitals found that hospitals with governing boards performed better than HSE directly managed hospitals in respect of hygiene service quality and acute care accreditation. See “*Do hospitals governed by Boards perform better than directly managed Health Service Executive hospitals?*”, Dr Terence McWade; paper submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements of Diploma in Corporate Governance, UCD, July 2008

At the celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Economic Development*, Dr TK Whitaker, widely and correctly regarded as our most outstanding public servant, wrote about his colleagues who worked with him on this historically significant document (and I quote)

*"We were a good team. Nobody had asked us to map out an escape route from the utter despondency of the mid- 1950s, plagued by emigration, unemployment and virtual stagnation. We undertook this initiative of our own accord, on top of our normal duties.....,"*¹⁶

I have come across and worked with many people in the public service who live and work by the ideals and ethos of public service so well expressed and demonstrated by Ken Whitaker. But I am concerned that there are many for whom those ideals are not an informing driver and like many of us here today I am disturbed to read of and encounter indefensible behaviours in some public service settings.

Ethos and ideals are important. From these spring motivation, actions and standards of behaviour and conduct. A sense of noble purpose will be strengthened by Noble purpose will be strengthened by contestability and strengthened accountability. If public service organisations and people are imbued with the ethos of public service then the management and accountability systems and structures will be empowering rather than controlling and restrictive.

Maybe we need to go back to first principles? We are citizens of a Republic, a word derived from the Latin Res Publica – a public thing. Public servants serve in many different ways those people with whom we are joint stakeholders of the of the State. The concept, of fellow citizen is, I believe, much more powerful than those conveyed by words like service provider, service user and customer. It may be time to move away from the utilitarian rhetoric which infuses so much discussion and planning about the public service and restore the rhetoric of idealism and striving for the public good - in other words being public servants and members of a noble profession with a duty of service?

But this return to first principles is part of a wider challenge. We need to create a civic ethic for our Republic and, in that context, give priority to strengthening the effectiveness of our public institutions. My subjective view is that, somewhat paradoxically given our independence struggle, we have a poorly developed public ethic. There is a powerful tendency in Irish political life, reinforced by the multi –member constituency structure and electoral system and the absence of a meaningful system of local government – to pursue local and regional concerns at national level. Clientelism and the pursuit of sectoral interests loom large. This is also exacerbated by our strong networks of family and local connections. US President Barack Obama writing about his Kenyan relatives makes the point that corruption may not always about personal greed –but is also about what is perceived as the higher obligations to the extended family^{17 18} We would recognise this very well indeed.

¹⁶ T. K Whitaker, *Looking back to 1958*, in *Economic Development 50 Years On 1958- 2008*, Edited by Michael Mulreany, IPA 2009, pages 18

¹⁷ "Dreams from My Father", Barack Obama; pages 324 – 345,, Canongate Books, Edinburgh, 2007

The way our society developed since the 1850s may provide a partial explanation. One of the features was the increasing power of the Catholic Church as the source of public morality and behaviour. The Church shared our ambiguity towards the (foreign) state and said little about “rendering to Caesar” but much about sexual behaviour. Little said about “rendering to Caesar” - e.g. paying taxes, much said about sexual behaviour. The Church was also a very authoritarian body and there was little accountability or transparency. Perhaps this did not encourage sufficient collective maturity?

Conclusion

My central thesis is that legislative, managerial and structural reforms are necessary to restore trust in the public service and to improve the levels of service and effectiveness. However, my belief is that reforms will not in themselves be effective without changing the environmental context – by introducing the concepts of contestability, strengthening accountability and restoring the Noble Purpose of the Public Service and their mutually reinforcing effects.

We have had almost 100 years of State building. In 2016 we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising. Perhaps is it time for us now to give priority to strengthening the effectiveness of our public institutions?

¹⁸ For an interesting reflection on Obama’s observation, see Michela Wrong, Prospect Magazine, May 2010, page 88