

Comments from individuals

1. **Joe wrote:** The Commission has a role to promote an agile, professional and high achieving public service. Any constraints on people socialising ideas, sharing failures and ideas in a frank manner or being able to hypothesise with public or private sector professions to tease out the best outcomes and emerging trends need to be taken very seriously. If the 'problem' the APSC is trying to address is a very small handful of public servants who have done the wrong thing, the 'cost' of semi-gagging all public servants does not stack up.
2. **Jay wrote:** Freedom of Speech is only an implied right under the Australian Constitution. As a result the Australian Government has free reign to implement its own policies in regards to Social Media Commentary. However, EVERY person has the right to comment on the political process which we are supposed to engage through a process of democratic discourse. Without discussing or promoting our own beliefs, how are people supposed to understand the opposing point of view? Every vote counts. So EVERY voice should have the ability to be heard. Unless the commentary leads to movements in financial markets, vilifies someone personally or discloses top secret or confidential information, commentary should be permitted. Bearing in mind there are individual laws that cover the previous three scenarios and therefore any social commentary that breaches these Acts faces lengthy court proceedings as a matter of course. Why is the government so afraid of the people? Embrace all voters. #letusspeak
3. **Jo wrote:** It's unfair and oppressive to expect that because someone works in the public service that they can't be affected by political and social issues and therefore have opinions about the issues which may affect them and the people who are important in their lives. A disclaimer on comments only draws attention to the fact that a person works in the public service and is more likely to be seen by a member of the public as being made on behalf of the employee's department. A more effective result could be achieved by instructing PS employees to remove any identification as a PS employee on their personal social media accounts and to not permit comments which identify their opinion as being related to their employment. Without any identification to the person's employment, it's difficult to see how someone can perceive an employee as making comment on behalf of their employer.
4. **Derek wrote:** I agree with another poster, John, who said "We should have freedom of speech, so long as we speak respectfully about issues". Being able to implement policy we disagree with merely speaks to the professionalism that is required of the Public Service. Why pretend we agree with everything we're told to do? It's like an atheist praying in Church to make their religious parents happy. As long as expression is respectful, it should be permitted.
5. **Darren wrote:** I think that there should be no restriction on political commentary, even policies within your department. I have been a public servant for more than a decade and I have served governments of the day of both persuasions. Never have I refused or failed to do the job I am expected to and remain apolitical in my work. However, I feel that public servants are more likely to be politically engaged than the average Australian, by the very nature of the work they do, and they should not be restricted from criticising policy or public positions. Also, I should be able to acknowledge that I support one party's views over another. When a politician says something stupid (which many of them do) I should be allowed to comment that they said something stupid. If we cannot call our policy makers out and tell them that what they say is wrong, or ignorant, then we end up with bad laws. As long as I'm not giving away sensitive or inside information, I should be free to say what I want.
6. **Patrick wrote:** It is interesting that the APSC's discussion paper does not include the United States' very permissive rules about public comment by public servants. In the US, the 'Pickering' test says that the government cannot restrain speech by a public servant on a matter of public concern unless the comments create disruption to government operations that is so severe that it justifies the restriction on free speech. In *Pickering v Board of Education*, a teacher was fired for writing a 'letter to the editor' criticising his own school's policies and budgeting decisions; the court held that this comment could not be punished. The commentary at paragraph 36 onwards of the discussion paper, that the current APS approach 'is more liberal than that which applies in some countries', without any acknowledgement of the existence of any countries with more permissive rules, is difficult to justify.

[Moderator's note: the research done for the preparation of the discussion paper focussed primarily on Anglophone common law countries. The United States does not fit within that category.]

7. **Marian wrote:** I don't see any reason why public servants should be prohibited from commenting on government policy. We are citizens and taxpayers of Australia and have a right to make comments on what the government is doing. I can see that there is an argument that there should be more caution about what is said about the area in which you work, but why should I be prohibited from making comment publicly about immigration policy or environment policy if I don't even work in that area? Nothing I do at work has anything to do with those areas -- my views on them are completely irrelevant to how I carry out my work.
8. **Brooke wrote:** I think it's incredibly unfair that I'm worried about liking posts or refuting incorrect information for fear of losing my job. I also think it's unfair that I have to be careful about whether I voice opinions on things such as mistreatment of refugees just because I work in a department that is linked to them. I support humanity, which is neither fully left or right, and in a democracy I should have as much right as anyone else to express my humanity. Yes I think there should be repercussions in clear cases where a persons employer is expressly denigrated, but that applies to all employees, regardless of sector. And it's not fair that ministers like Ms Cash can accuse me of "not living in the real world" and I then am unable to rebut with how I actually do. If it applies to one, it should apply to all... Ministers cannot degrade public servants either.
9. **April wrote:** Questions and answers a. Should APS employees be prevented from making public comment on all political issues? If it does not relate directly to the programs administered by their agency, preventing APS employees from engaging in public discourse as private citizens is excessive and oppressive. It is also unhealthy for Australian democracy. b. Should APS employees be prevented explicitly from making critical public comment on social media about services or programs administered by their agencies? YES.
10. **Leanne wrote:** Lots of great comments already but I think one of the key criteria as to whether a comment is appropriate, is whether it is made using knowledge from within the department you work for, that is not a publicly available. This might extend to expressing opinions which only an employee would know eg 'the people in branch X wouldn't know what day it is - no wonder there are so many problems'. Being an employee, the public might assign more credibility to the statement than they would have if it was made by someone who obviously did not have inside knowledge. The same would apply if you were criticising a program being run by your department eg 'that program was thought up on the spot in response to pressure from the minister and is doomed to failure'. However if I want to make a comment about the work of my department in my position as a customer of that department, or as a taxpayer who has an interest in the direction of government programs generally, I ought to be able to do so.
11. **Kip wrote:** Hey, I understand that freedom of speech is not a protected right under our constitution. However there have been a couple of landmark cases (in particular *Nationwide News Pty Ltd v Wills* and *Australian Capital Television Pty Ltd v Commonwealth*) before the high court which kinda say, "DHS, you can tell people that they cant make political comment, but the high court wont be supporting you." There were a few more cases which kind of muddled the waters but they were related to actual electoral comments made by politicians and don't really have much bearing on our situation. So in essence, regardless of outcome, the High Court of Australia supports citizens in the making of political comment. Of course, a friendly politician may decide to try and pass this through legislation, but until someone is brave enough to stand up and say, "I want to pass a law that prohibits people from speaking their mind," the courts will support my being able to express opinion. Thank you for your time. [Moderator's note: comments posted on this site are not legal advice and should not be relied on for that purpose.]
12. **Brad wrote:** A public servant is paid to work 37.5 hours a week. That is all the public servant is paid for the work they do for the Commonwealth of Australia. If the Commonwealth of Australia expects public servants to work (i.e. represent them and abide by employment rules) over and above 37.5 hours per week then it must pay public servants to do so. It is clear that stopping public servants from participating in civil society due to restrictions placed on them by virtue of their employment means

that they are still beholden to the employer. The employer is claiming that a public servant has to abide by employment conditions over and above the 37.5 hours per week. The Commonwealth of Australia therefore must continue to pay public servants their salary for as long as they remain in public service (APSC conditions). If no payment is made beyond the existing 37.5 hours per week then public servants are no longer public servants but ordinary citizens.

13. **Patrick wrote:** The current policy conflates the role of Secretary of a Department with the role of every other public servant. A secretary must have a relationship of close personal confidence with their Minister and other members of the Government. They are in constant contact, under intense conditions, and the Minister's subjective confidence in the secretary is vital to the efficient discharge of both officials' functions. These considerations simply do not exist in relation to the rest of the public service. Does it matter if an investigator or administrative worker and the secretary of the Department have personal confidence in each other, or if a Minister feels a personal sense of trust for a middle manager in a statutory agency? I can tell you plenty of APS employees do not have confidence in their senior leaders or the Government. Yet they get the job done.

Criticism or adverse comment in relation to one's own agency is only a problem where it relates directly to the speaker's ability to do their job or disrupts the workplace. For example, airing a private employment grievance in public (or even in private) may create a tense, hostile environment in the workplace. As another example, a statement by a police officer that certain offenders should not be arrested might impair their colleagues' confidence in that officer in an arrest scenario. But the current APS policy on public comment goes well beyond such a principle. Where an employee merely criticises the employer's policy or decisions, what is the problem? The Government does not have the same legitimate interest in 'brand' or artificial perception that a private business does. No harm to an agency's genuine reputation can occur as a result of calm criticism or dissent. Let the public read the official line and the dissent and make up their own minds. No harm done.

Have a trial of free political comment for six months or a year. See if anyone dies. See if public confidence in the APS collapses.

14. **AS wrote:** Regardless of the outcome, any new policy needs to more closely align with the reality of social media. For example, if a Facebook post would contravene the social media policy if posted by a public servant what happens if a public servant like that post? Or reacts to it with one of the new icons available? For example, an angry face could suggest a dislike of the post. Similarly, with twitter is a retweet considered to be an endorsement? It can be used to raise an awareness of something that is particularly abhorrent. The current policy lacks any discussion of these sorts of things, but they are exactly the fine degrees required to give public servants confidence.
15. **KVCM wrote:** Upholding the APS Code of Conduct must be the focus of any behaviors regardless of the medium / platform. Posting comments as a private citizen, making it clear they are your own views and not those of your Minister / Employer is essential, however I would not be making any critical statements in the current political climate. Anything commented on should already be in the public domain eg comments about programs, resourcing etc. However, everyone should be mindful that there may be consequences, and not obvious ones, should you be 'critical'. The current environment is not one that encourages 'fearless advice' etc. Any determination / policy published by the APSC should get rid of subjective language that leaves things open to interpretation eg was that statement disrespectful or not. And I found a discussion paper full of examples from 1902 legislation patronizing - was it to illustrate how lucky we have come so far?
16. **Pen name wrote:** Remaining a-political should not preclude someone from criticising an individual's performance in government. Trying to gag or otherwise censor the public service is a move that will cause backlash. Already I've heard anecdotal evidence of APS staff worried about accepting pamphlets on the treatment of detainees on Manus Island and Naru. Questioning obviously wrong policy is not straying from the APS code of conduct.
17. **Chris wrote:** In relation to what can and cant be said outside of work in your own private time , it should be acknowledged that comments made on social media made in your own private time that in no way, shape or form mentions your employment or employer should be on an "As is" basis. People should not be persecuted or railroaded for making public comment in their own personal time on any

social media platform regardless of what the posting is about or responding to that is not work/employment related. I think the ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights) Article 19 makes it pretty clear about the rights of individuals but also some limitations around those same rights. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, states that: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

18. **Chris wrote:** I can understand the argument and the directive in relation to posting politically or work based comments on social media. These kind of comments can not only bring the the agency into disrepute and damage their reputation, but can also damage the credibility and employment status of the person/employee in question. Should we be able to make comment about political issues on social media but clearly expressing that these are your own personal views and not the views expressed by the department/agency you work for ? well that is a not only good but rhetorical argument for another day as based on the law and opinion of the day, this area is extremely grey and needs not only definitive clarification, but absolute determination as to what can and can't be said on political issues without fear of reprisals or recriminations.
19. **Tarnee wrote:** Dear Whom it may Concern I do believe the social media stance is perfect as it stands. I believe as APS employees , we do serve a purpose to think about and analyse what we post online and comment before we do it. We as employees represent the APS - and agencies contained under the APS. We should take the upmost caution and preservance when online in any action we are doing. If people are not happy with this , then I suggest that these people can no longer state they are an APS employee , because as an entitlement of an APS employee , we should fully uphold the social media records - and be proud to do so. I do not think they need to be amended , I think they are great as they are.
20. **Ashleigh wrote:** If the APS are censored from making any criticism of the government of the day and their policies, it's going to be even harder to encourage good people to want to work with us. It's natural for citizens to have an opinion about the way the country is run. In fact it shows a healthy thirst for knowledge and means the employee is plugged in and engaged. I have very strong political beliefs but this in no way affects my ability to do my job. The APS value of integrity means that I do my best in every opportunity I have and always seek to have the best outcome for my organisation and the people we serve. If I am using social media as a platform to talk about things of a political nature, as long as I am not aligning myself to the views of my organisation, the APS, or the government, I believe I should be allowed to criticise, critique and question government policy and implementation. If the rules change I believe you will see more excellent public servants leave.
21. **Anony Mous:** The medium doesn't change the message. Public servants have for years known what is appropriate to say in what setting, they have understood what they can and cannot place in a letter to the editor, and what they can reasonably say to acquaintances and colleagues. I fear there may be some confusion among public servants about the nature of social media; rather than any confusion about what is appropriate comment. It seems some people don't understand that while they may post to social media from the privacy of their lounge room, it does not make their post any less public. There really is a simple test, if you wouldn't write it in a Letter to the Editor of a daily newspaper with your full name and suburb, don't post it on social media. Or, even easier for those too young to remember the role of Letters pages, if you wouldn't say it in front of your boss in a public forum, don't say it on social media. Problem solved.
22. **Bessy wrote:** Having the right to vote, by default, forces you to have a political opinion. While public servants retain the right to vote, they should also be able to voice that opinion.
23. **Michael wrote:** Public servants are still Australian citizens and as such are entitled to participate in the democratic process of the country where they live. In this day and age, part of the democratic process includes being able to have opinions on the issues of the day and express them publicly. Public servants should have the same rights as any other Australian to comment on the government of the day and political matters. I'd be inclined to even say that they should be allowed to comment on issues

relating to their own department, as long as they're not revealing any state secrets or insider knowledge in doing so.

24. **Daniel wrote:** Public servants should be allowed to say anything on social media during their unpaid time.
25. **John wrote:** We should have freedom of speech, so long as we speak respectfully about issues
26. **Jason wrote:** It has been shown enforcing these laws has been problematic and that any given person would be able to separate an individual from their APS role and differentiate a public, personal comment, from their departments official comment. To me these rules are in place simply to control. The APS in my opinion (see what I did their, identified this as my opinion.) is concerned about being embarrassed with their employee's opinion going against the grain. It has been shown in court proceedings that this policy is unworkable, and unenforceable. There is no reason to restrict an employee's opinions, the APS should be encouraging debate and differing opinions. Consider that the government is their to represent it's people, which includes APS employees, they are not there to dictate what a person can say.
27. **Joshua wrote:** While it is often said that "'harsh or extreme" criticisms of any politician, political party or policy, if the comment could raise doubts about their impartiality.' however what is never mentioned is that the reversal could also ring true, that someone who is so in love/support with a politician/party/policy raises doubts of their ability to be impartial with the opposing party. the rules should differ for different types of employees (such as tighter limits on senior executives) i agree with the above statement specifically in regards to SES (and possibly EL2's) given they are the managers of the APS and more in a position to be seen as speaking for the APS, however i still feel they should be free to say whatever they wish to say in a private capacity as members of staff should be free to say what they want in a private capacity if they make it clear their views are unrelated to their jobs. i agree with this point but think that short of someone sock puppeting an account made to look official that the expectation should be that the views are personal and unrelated to their jobs, without the need to explicitly state this.
28. **John wrote:** I think some practical tips to help public servants reduce the risk that their comments on social media could be mistaken for their employer would be helpful. e.g. 1. Not putting your employer on your social media account. 2. Avoiding public comment about the work of your agency (where it is not on the public record). 3. Avoiding making comments informed by a public servant's inside knowledge on an issue.
29. **Lucy wrote:** 1. No. Being able to make political comment is a democratic right Australia. Being able to separate the individual from their identity as a public servant is not possible. As such, different rules for different groups may be a way to allow for individuals to be able to make comment on issues, where it does not bring their role as a public servant in respect to comments they make into question. 2. Yes. Private comments being made in a public capacity regarding an area or policy you may have privileged information about will likely reflect poorly on the APS. 3. No. The rules should be the same for everyone. 4. No. This approach would diminish the reputation of the APS. 5. Yes they are clear. They do not appear to require revising.
30. **Chris wrote:** I argue pretty strongly that for people to freely express personal freedom a pretty common sense approach is best: "Say whatever you want, but it should not be easily identifiable to an organisation." This also has a minor caveat: If you can somehow link the two by cross referencing the name of a facebook page against an organisations own website or something similar, this shouldn't be relevant. I didn't personally request my name to be put on my organisations website, but hey, it's there. I should still have the right to possess and discuss my political opinions without an kafkaesque fear of it somehow being linked to my professional reputation. No matter how distasteful, racist, sexist, or whatever an opinion is, a person should have the right to express that opinion, provided it is not obviously linked to an organisation. I understand the governments need to distance themselves from their employees opinions, but no matter how distasteful, it is their opinion, not the governments
31. **SomeBloke wrote:** I do not agree with the current policy. When I am not at work I don't have to where my work clothes, so why do I have to uphold values that are not my own whilst at home anonymously

on the internet? I should be able to do what I wish to do (obviously nothing illegal), also have my opinion on anything that I wish to have an opinion on, it is a free country and as a someone that votes I should be able to oppose views of the government of the day

32. **Lee wrote:** The right to dissent is a fundamental right of any decent democracy. A person can think Manus and Naura are a national disgrace, but still do their job for DIBP. I may think the allocation of basics cards is atrocious racial profiling, but still allocate them when working for DHS. A public servants job, especially at the lower APS levels, is to administer and respect the law. I should have every right to say a politician or a law is abysmal in my private time, without having a risk of "Bringing the department in to disrepute".
33. **Belinda wrote:** As an employee of the APS I am 100% committed to upholding the Values and Code of Conduct whilst at work, and in situations that are in connection with my employment. As a citizen I have my own set of values and beliefs and shouldn't be forced to remove myself from public debate on social media platforms just because I am a public servant. Of course being a member of the APS doesn't mean that I agree with everything supported by the government of the day, because the government of the day changes! My suggestion would be that APS employees should not list their Department or Agency as their employer on social media sites. They should not divulge any information that is not already available on public record and should not publically denigrate their employer. Outside these restrictions, I should be able to have the same rights as Australians who work in the private sector.
34. **Dave wrote:** I believe all APS employees should be able to make comment on governments, ministers, the APS as any other non APS citizen would be able to. Whilst at all times if commenting on a minister one should be able to comment something like "in my opinion I believe Minister xxx was incorrect in that comment". I think so long as you make it clear you are providing a personal view on something and are not making comment or disclosing information that is not publicly available or known then this should be allowed as should being allowed to 'like' 'comment' and share posts on matters or newspaper articles that appear on social media and if comment is made one just needs to make it clear that this is their personal opinion, and again remain respectful. Having said that under no circumstances should anyone be able to put provide information on social media that is not available to the public such as employee names of any department that is not available to public, or contact numbers etc
35. **N wrote:** I think that the current policy in place has Public Servants feeling a collective Orwellian fear of the APS. If we are allowed to join a political party and partake in political activism without our impartiality coming into question - then surely sharing a private opinion is fine
36. **John wrote:** In a reasonable society it should be recognised that it is possible to be critical of something, but to also be able to set those criticisms aside and get the job done at the end of the day. If these activities raise questions on the part of an observer then I would say the issue lies with the observer rather than the actor. The solution to the challenges of living in an increasingly networked and information-driven world is not to avoid creating new information, it is to ensure that the information created and managed well. Discouraging public servants from honest participation in discussion will isolate public servants from the public and do more to erode public perception and confidence than anything else.
37. **Andrew wrote:** This is actually a topic I've considered quite a bit. No human is 100% impartial, we all have our biases from our life experiences and at the end of the day it doesn't matter. We have Operational Blue Prints filled with rules that are backed up by policy/legislation, they dictate what we can and cannot do in regards to serving our customers. My love/loathing for whichever political party/union etc doesn't change what I do at work. As long as my posts are not of racist/hateful/illegal nature etc I do not feel that should be an issue and I should be able to have a political opinion. The reason is being employed by the government is different from a normal employer, being that a normal employer does not play a part in every facet of your life. Therefore, I feel if we feel an action of the government is wrong, we should be able to constructively criticise it, because at the end of the day is not discussion an important part of the democratic machine?

38. **Tim wrote:** Whilst not a user of social media myself I felt the guide was written from the angle that all comments will be negative to the APS. It might be worth commenting this need not be the case. Perhaps you could suggest limits around unofficially supporting your department/agency policies programs. Sends the same restraint message but from a positive perspective.
39. **Rob wrote:** It's a very difficult series of questions to try and put a simple answer forward. Right now it seems the current response (policy) is to limit the ability for staff (APS Wide) to make public comment and this is because Social Media has grown so quickly and we have not necessarily adapted to that in the APS. I will say that my response is firmly on the side that the comment(s) must be constructive and not defamatory. The APS behaviours are transferable in the home/workplace. Social media is moving quickly and this policy needs to adapt with it and allow the ability of staff to constructively contribute. I have read numerous pieces online and have thought that I could constructively contribute but given the current policy opted not to. Part of me is disappointed that I could not respond to provide accurate information given that in a discussion (not online) I do that as a matter of course, therein lies the biggest IRONY in all of this and begs the question of how do we fix it.
40. **Lorant wrote:** Providing a personal opinion should be allowed without the need for a disclaimer as the assumption should be that the opinion is personal and doesn't necessarily mean the person is impartial in their work within the APS. Criticism of any department which involves the person's duties should come with a disclaimer that it is their personal opinion and doesn't impact their work. Or for those with greater influence should be more restricted however. The restriction doesn't change the opinion of the APS worker it only prevents them from expressing it - so the risk is only reputational and not necessarily real but perceived. More transparency rather than more restrictions can only lead to a more realistic understanding of the workforce and while it has its drawbacks is a more democratic system that protective measures - for the community to whom we work for.
41. **Mel wrote:** I think the Public service has removed any liberty that public servants have. Any other Australian is allowed to use their social media to express themselves but for whatever reason the Public Service Commission discourages public servants and removes their right to talk freely. Enough with the fear tactics
42. **Patrick wrote:** It is said that Qantas staff can't publicly criticise their employer, so nor should public servants. But Qantas doesn't confiscate 20% of my income. Qantas doesn't tell me what I can and can't buy, sell, import or smoke. Qantas doesn't tell me who I can and can't marry. Qantas can't send armed men into my house to arrest me. Qantas doesn't decide what my children are taught at school. The government is not a private body. The government's interests do not matter. Only the public's interests matter. And the public is not harmed by public servants commenting on or criticising the government or even their own agency. Instead, the public interest is in the free exchange of information and ideas, for the good of democracy. Public servants have a duty as citizens to participate fully in political debate, including in relation to the programs they administer.
43. **Peter wrote:** Hi, I think that we should have the same rights and rules of every Australian Citizen. We should be able to speak our mind, even to the point of a difference of opinion with a Government Minister, providing we do not denigrate our department, our managers or colleagues. We should not make generalisations about any specific communities, unlike Certain Government Ministers. We should at all times protect privacy of others and never speak off specific occurrences or people. We should be able to comment on issues that may affect our ability to perform our job, and draw attention to factual occurrence and if needs be, have protection under Whistle Blower legislation. In Summary. No more or less opportunity than every one else, but an onus of responsibility to not bring Department or Government into disrepute.
44. **Declan wrote:** The freedom of speech of public servants should not be restricted. That said, public servants should not reveal privileged information in public forums without permission, nor should they speak on behalf of their employer without permission.
45. **Michael wrote:** I should be able to comment on policies and topics in the public spotlight that affect me, my family or my field without fear of reprisal from my employer - particularly where the discussion is not at all related to my employer. I don't expect to be able to share operational details about the things that I or my colleagues work on, but to place a blanket ban on political discussion is

an excessively oppressive and heavy handed way of mitigating the perceived risks of public servants engaging in civic discourse.

46. **Ashka wrote:** What I find incredible is that in the current environment the government is allowed to say what they want about public servants whether it be about the EA's, sacking of staff etc however as public servants we are not allowed to respond. What happened to free speech look I don't think that we should be able to say everything and anything however I do believe that we should be allowed to express our opinion with out the threat of loosing my job. One sitting member is allowed to say something about what the government is doing or another parliamentary member with out recourse, but if I was to say something in social media about a sitting member I can be disciplined. Where is the fairness in this???
47. **Andy wrote:** As a citizen of Australia covered by all the same laws as any other citizen and participating in the election of representatives at all levels of Government I should have the same rights inside the confines of the law to make comments through any medium. My employment places certain requirements on me within the execution of my employment to be apolitical, but that does not exclude me from participation in all of societies facets. We should not be forced in our private lives to pretend we agree with or not comment on decisions made by Governments purely because of our employment. In some cases it is excluding those who have real world access to the impacts of those policies on multiple life experiences. The claim that our personal views would draw into doubt our ability to perform our role is similar to a "don't ask, don't tell" philosophy that if we don't say we don't agree then we can pretend everyone does and all it right with the world. It is a naïve philosophy.
48. **Nancy wrote:** My concern about the policy relates to how other APS employees are protected from social media comments made by a fellow APS employee. Many issues arise from one employee's comments about another. The APS Values and Code of Conduct specifically make reference to being respectful and how people should behave in a manner that is respectful, courteous and without harassment. I understand that there are other protections for individuals outside the workplace but with current debate on amending/abolishing Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, these protections may be weakened. As a responsible workplace we should be encouraging our staff's respect and treatment of others to extend beyond the workplace. These responsibilities should not be left at the front door when leaving the workplace, and if we can encourage the behaviour beyond the workplace we would not have to deal with the attitudes and consequences of what is said on social media about one and other during working hours.
49. **Steve wrote:** As a person who is entitled to vote per my personal convictions, and as someone who is expected to pay taxes, abide by the laws of the day, I should be entitled to participate in exactly the same activities as any other voting, tax paying Australian. My employment should not impinge upon my right, as a voter, to criticise the government via any (legal) medium I choose. My employment status should not be allowed to dictate my rights as a private citizen. Clearly there is. Line to be drawn, when it comes to making public information that I can only have as an employee of the Commonwealth. My personal opinions are mine to have and share, and my right to have and share them must be protected.
50. **Nadine wrote:** Having social media guidelines makes complete sense. However, I think both sides of government would eventually do themselves a great disservice silencing or stymying the views or opinions of public servants. Filtered, yes, but blocked completely through threat of prosecution and loss of job, no. In saying that, I find it interesting that every DSS employee's full name and place of employment have been publicly published on the internet via the DSS web based resource Mindhive. I did not acquiescence to having my name and employer being accessible to the public via the internet, and find it strange that DSS have done this considering the recent introduction of these stricter rules regarding social media and being a public servant.
51. **Shelley wrote:** My comment relates to the following section of the guide: Additional considerations when participating online 6.2.17 "Failure to remove or contradict comments made on, for example, a blog or social media post may be seen as endorsement of those comments." I don't agree and I think this point should be deleted. It is preferable to ignore any comments that may express a 'negative' view of the government. If I was to contradict comments relating to the government made on social

media, that would be much worse as I would be putting an opinion out there. That contradiction would likely result in many more comments from others. Also, I don't disclose where I work on social media and I do not want to. If I was to contradict any comment that may be 'negative' towards the government, then people would figure out and tell others where I worked. The whole situation would be exacerbated unnecessarily.

52. **Chris wrote:** In a world of ever increasing mistrust of authority/government and in a time where social media is rapidly becoming the default source of immediate "facts", an obstinate approach or a deliberately faux persona put out by governments, their agencies and staff would be less than helpful. In my work, contacting, cajoling and encouraging participation in our foundation program has become almost dependent upon social media for the demographic of interest. There is no doubt from my experience that judicious use of social media in my work program has profoundly improved the ability of my program to be successful. As the interconnectiveness of the world increases, even the term "social media" is likely to give way to a more generalized plugged-in term, blurring as to what is social versus what is simply information & messaging. We would be wise to embrace this to be a part of that stream rather than stubbornly stick to rapidly crumbling notions of what is information and what is "self".
53. **Patrick wrote:** When criticism of an official act or policy brings the Government or an agency into disrepute, it is the official action that has created the problem, not the criticism. Criticism is merely observation. If criticism is not grounded in fact then it can be cured with an official explanation. There is no harm in it. Public disagreements on matters of policy do no harm. You don't need to agree with a policy to implement it. Policies change all the time. Clearly people are, at some point, implementing policy they disagree with. So why keep up this fiction by suppressing their views? The public wants more informed political debate. Public servants are the best-informed people to participate. Yet they are systematically excluded. If a person is not a public servant now, and they criticise the government on public record, can they never become a public servant? 'Only strong and successful organisations are unafraid of criticism.' Senator the Hon George Brandis QC, Attorney-General, 2016
54. **Clemson wrote:** The policy is too broad to offer useful guidance. By applying to any device having "capacity to distribute material" the policy effectively treats all our social interactions as potentially public, and by denying us sensible precautions like anonymity the policy treats all our public commentary as representative of the APS. This allows onerous and unreasonable interpretations - e.g. a public servant might in breach of APS values whenever they adopted the tone normal in some online communities, even if nobody in that community knew they were associated with the APS. I think the policy is trying too hard to cover everything. If 'social media' needs to be covered in policies regarding bullying or breaches of privilege etc., add it to those policies instead. Guidance on how we conduct ourselves in our private lives with our private devices needs to be more helpful and less threatening.
55. **Paul wrote:** I believe that personal email or SMS should not be considered as Social Media, unless we are identifying as an Australian Public Servant and use this to influence other parties. I believe we should also be able to make statements about policy on radio but we should not identify our full name and position or department.
56. **May wrote:** As public servants I think it is crucial that we do not speak on behalf of the government about government policy without authorisation. As private citizens though I believe we are entitled to an opinion and to free speech. I think it is reasonable to have guidelines in place so that we do not identify our workplaces on social media or comment on policies that we are directly involved in at work or have confidential information about. However, as Australian citizens we have a stake in policies that affect us directly in our day to day lives. For example, as a mother of small children I have a strong interest in the policies related to paid parental leave, childcare and early childhood education. I do not work in these policy areas and have no further information on these policies than any other member of the public, but should have a right to an opinion and the right to have frank conversations on the issues.
57. **Bec wrote:** As social media has become more prevalent in society I think it is appropriate to allow public servants greater ability to comment on the happenings of the day, including political issues. We are asked to be actively involved in our work and be aware of the environment in which we operate,

but the ability not to comment and engage in conversation with others prevents a deeper involvement and understanding. Public servants should probably not make comments on their own department, or otherwise have guidelines on what they can discuss, but otherwise I feel that public servants should have greater freedom to participate in conversations on social media.

58. **Tam wrote:** As public servants we cannot make public comments on our immediate work areas, however the current regime has removed our ability to have a voice or opinion on any government issue – this is not what we as Australians have fought for throughout our history. This regime of disempowerment is not healthy for Australia or Government as it dis-encourages frank and fearless advice, discussion and removes free speech.
59. **Jill wrote:** I strongly believe public servants must be impartial during the course of their duties. I'm not convinced, however, that this covers time outside of work. I think it should be appropriate for public servants to comment on political issues in their capacity as private citizens. This seems to be a natural demonstration of freedom of expression. But comments should be clearly in the role as private citizens, not referencing their knowledge or experience as a public servant, or publicising their workplace. I think, however, that social media should not be used to bully or harass colleagues. This remains important as relationships continue outside the workplace, and comments of an inappropriate nature remain so regardless of where they are said.
60. **Donna wrote:** No matter who your employer is, whilst you are in their employ, I believe you should respect that bond and not do or say anything that would damage that company's reputation. This is what is happening in private industries and the community now. For example: Footballers being banned from media and managers not able to say anything about the referees. The other examples quoted in the discussion paper, so why should APS employees be different. I agree it is an honour and privilege to serve by being a public servant. We need to be just as respectful, whether you hold a different opinion or view to the government of the day. The public don't care if what you are saying is your personal view or one in an official capacity (no matter your level). We need to ensure we do not create doubt in the public's mind of our ability to serve impartially. To protect public servants from any erosion of trust now or in the future, I believe they should not be posting anything critical.
61. **Jeremy wrote:** I think public servants should be able to participate freely in discussion on social media - including both positive and negative comments about government policy* (no inside info, private info, protected info). To only allow positive comments, and not criticism of government policy, is a form of censorship that effectively makes the public service a political mouthpiece. Also, government policy changes over time, whereas social media comments are forever - so being positive about current government policy would risk criticising a future policy. For this reason, the current stance on social media is unworkable - and until it's fixed, no public servant should feel safe making any comment about policy, even positive comments. Any constraint on public servants' participation, is a gross intrusion on our private lives and our ability to participate in public dialogue, our online communities and democratic process. The public service may employ us. It does not own us.
62. **Susan wrote:** I have worked for three federal government agencies in my working life and am proud to have done so; I believe in what these agencies stand for and deliver to the Australian community. I am not about to bite the hand that feeds me. If I find a significant shift in agency policy and practice which would be at odds with my own belief system and make being a-political in a professional role impossible I wouldn't hang on for any length of time I would simply leave. All this does not mean as a public servant I relinquish my citizenship rights; the 'contract' would need to be re-written and re-negotiated, good luck with that one. It's a little ironic at a time when Freedom Of Speech is being kept on the national agenda public servants are being selected to be silenced. I think social media and APS employment will continue to be a contentious issue open to public and private debate.
63. **Mathew wrote:** As private individuals are allowed to be critical of the government, so too should regular public servants. - Public servants who are in the public arena, and known for their association with their department, should not be critical in such a way as to damage the reputation or operation of their department, just as in private industry. - If a public servant who is not normally in the public arena is suddenly thrown there, only then should a disclaimer be made that their beliefs are separate from their employer. - Conversely, any public servant who is making statements in an ostensibly

official capacity, that is, deliberately portraying themselves as an official of the agency, and is misrepresenting the agency, should have grounds for official disciplinary action taken against them.

64. **John wrote:** A public servant is a citizen in their own time. Democratic participation should be a right for every citizen or democracy is worthless. As a citizen I should be free to make any comment that any other citizen is free to make provided I stress that it is my personal opinion and I am not using specialist knowledge that would only be available to someone in my employment. There should be no other line for us to worry about crossing. Personally I have no truck with social media and never use it but that is my choice. The issue is free speech pure and simple.
65. **Student of History wrote:** Awesome - lets make sure public servants are too scared to make any comments that could be construed as political. Any broad reaching policy that makes people too scared to comment on a topic "just in case" is taking us down a road that allows Governments to abuse their power. People who work for the public service have just as much right to question the Government in a democratic society as the next person. If they don't, then how democratic a society is it?
66. **Silvia wrote:** If a person's social media profiles are not linked to the organisation there should be no reason to prevent anyone from using the platform as they wish. As Australian citizens we are required by law to vote and that means the vast majority of APS employees have political views that makes us good, engaged citizens. Of course it is important to be respectful at all times and certainly do not discuss work-related material or colleagues on social media. We need to embrace the technology of the future and educate staff on what can be gained rather than always being afraid. Generally speaking if an employee is doing something untoward on social media then its often the case that the individual is exhibiting unwanted behaviour in the workplace and that should be addressed individually.
67. **Marlene wrote:** On social media, public servants should be free to comment on politics, policies and the government as long as it is not related to their own work or the work of their department.
68. **Springsoft wrote:** Some of the content in the discussion paper is so broad as to either enable it as a tool to quiet unrest, or leave things to open slather. Public comments where an individual cannot be directly identified as an employee of a specific agency should be specifically permitted - to make this up to individual interpretation is confusing. Furthermore, I refer to 6.4.4 "Wearing or displaying political material by an employee is generally inappropriate....". So recent activities where solidarity with LGBT groups has resulted in people wearing material that supports, for example, marriage equality (which has been a hot political topic recently) - are you suggesting that could be prohibited???? I remind the Commission that every major social advance in this country over my 30+ years have been politicised at some point. Are you seriously suggesting this could be inappropriate in the future. Dark days indeed if the answer is "Yes"
69. **Samantha wrote:** APS employee should not be prevented from making public comment on political issues. Social media is private in nature and political opinions are a personal choice. I do strongly recommend the APS prevent employees from listing their employer/agency on social media, cutting any direct ties between the private lives of employees and work obligations. Yes-APS employees should be prevented from explicitly making critical public comment about services or programs administered by their agencies. We should keep things 'in-house' and not encourage 'keyboard warriors', it is important to maintain community trust with a united front. The above comments apply to all APS employees, no different set of rules for different groups. No disclaimers should be used, again social media is private in nature and should be distanced from work commitments (hence not listing the APS or agencies as employers and making explicitly critical comments).
70. **NS wrote:** Seems that the proposed guidelines places a heavily emphasis on people being employees of the APS first, and citizens of Australia second. Please remember that staff leave agencies - for most its a job at the end of the day - where as their role as a good citizen, questioning the decisions, comments and policies of the government of the day or the opposition is part of their responsibility as a citizen, almost more then that of being a good employee (for however long that may be) . In addition, in this current climate of extended EA negotiations with a focus on strict bargaining guidelines, morale, trust and commitment which employees may have for and in their agency is most

likely at a low. As such, comparing this context with private companies (2 government agencies vs 5 private businesses examples of social media guidelines) which include bonuses, pay rises above CPI, and a positive, inclusive and encouraging executive is my opinion unreasonable.

71. **Gavin wrote:** Per another post which I agree entirely: The current social media requirements for APS staff are intrusive and compromise the implied right to political communication we have as Australians. Social interaction and communication increasingly takes place online. APS staff should be able to express political beliefs online, in the same way as at a dinner party or in a conversation with friends. APS staff are rightly allowed to attend political protests, join a political parties and engage in other political activities in their personal capacity. Expressing political opinions on social media should not be treated differently. APS staff should not identify themselves as APS employees when making political comments online and they should not comment publicly on matters directly related to their work. Aside from that - APS staff should be free to engage in political dialogue online as all Australians are. This is a fundamental tenet of our representative government.
72. **Hannah wrote:** In 10 years of working in Government I have only ever seen fantastic, impartial and evidence based decision making, and this is despite the fact that as humans, Public Servants naturally hold opinions. To imply that they cannot be trusted to comment responsibly on social media is to imply they cannot be trusted anywhere. Why does the medium change things? I.e. if we're questioning the integrity and trustworthiness of the Public Service; why should it be limited to social media? Either we are trustworthy everywhere, or we are not. As part of the Australian community we have a right and a responsibility to add our voice to debate. And if this is done in private time from a private device, with no reference to an employing agency, then there should be no limitations on comment. I strongly agree that failing to correct or moderate anti-Government commnest is NOT the responsibility of indiviual APS staff, and to say that association is guilt is drifting dangerously towards McCarthyism.
73. **David wrote:** How about rather than stifling public debate and requiring people to add disclaimers why can't any comments being made in an official capacity carry the disclaimer, like the political ads on TV and radio.
74. **Tanya wrote:** I am both a private citizen and a public servant. I can do both and don't need to agree with every government policy in my private life to perform my duties at work. I'm entitled to have an opinion that is contrary to the Government's and express that opinion. I am not a 'faceless' public servant who unthinkingly rubber stamps things - I'm employed to use my skills and knowledge creatively to better the country. If you want creative, innovative and smart solutions, you will get people who think and have opinions! Any democracy that cannot deal with criticism, regardless of the source, is no longer a democracy.
75. **Deon wrote:** I believe public servants should be more empowered than others to speak out. Government is meant to by employed for the benefit of the people. Public Servants administer government initiatives for the benefit of the Australian populace, but in recent times it appears the government is attempting to gag public servants in an attempt to mislead the public on how effective and efficient these initiatives are. in summary there are lies and statistics; but where is the truth? People should always be able to express their opinions politely and this should spark intelligent and productive informed discussion on how things can be improved. Furthermore all Australian's should have freedom of speech and unless a public servant purports that a view is not theirs individually, but rather that of their employer it should always be taken as that individuals opinion; in fact I believe this should be so for all people who express an opinion in any society that claims to be democratic.
76. **GT wrote:** Many Australians have fought and died for our rights, as a Nation and as individuals, to democracy and freedom of speech. Employers, even the public service, should not have the power to curtail those rights in any way. As well as being public servants, we are citizens with political views, which we should be able to air on social media, in a way that is respectful and professional.
77. **Max wrote:** Public servants should be allowed to express their personal political views when not at work, as long as they don't identify their agency or department, or disclose information that is not available to the public.

78. **Damian wrote:** I believe that an APS employee should be allowed to discuss and make comments in regards to any political issue, as long as it is respectful and professional. I do however believe there should be limitations to the types of comments one could make regarding their particular agency of employment, and that senior staff should have further limitations applied. I would not be objected to being able to make any comment as long as a personal disclaimer is added. I believe the APSC guidelines are clear.
79. **Clare wrote:** I think the current social media requirements for APS staff are intrusive and compromise the implied right to political communication we have as Australians. Social interaction and communication increasingly takes place online. APS staff should be able to express political beliefs online, in the same way as at a dinner party or in a conversation with friends. APS staff are rightly allowed to attend political protests, join a political parties and engage in other political activities in their personal capacity. Expressing political opinions on social media should not be treated differently. I think it is appropriate that APS staff not identify themselves as APS employees when making political comments online. I also think it is appropriate that APS staff not comment publicly on matters directly related to their work. Aside from that - APS staff should be free to engage in political dialogue online as all Australians are. This is a fundamental requirement of representative government.
80. **Samantha wrote:** It is an honour and privilege to serve the country and the people through being a public servant. To be an effective trusted public servant your relationships with others in the agency, the APS and the Government are crucial. When you as a public servant post anything publicly that could in any way be identified as being critical you create doubt in the minds of those who judge. Judgement can come from anywhere. Doubt in your ability to serve impartially erodes trust. You may publish something about another area of Government which you later end up working in - so there's no false solace in that suggestion. Social media commentary never goes away - it is forever. To protect public servants from any erosion of trust now or in the future, I believe they should not be posting anything critical. Whether or not you say where you work on social media - people can find out easily - especially as you become more senior (not necessarily even as senior as SES).
81. **Nev wrote:** In Australia we have a liberal democracy. Public servants are part of that democracy. As such the boundaries on political and social commentary should be set quite generously for all, public servants included. In our history we have fought totalitarian regimes that have sought to inhibit free speech, my father and grandfather both fought for freedom and democracy. I see the curtailing of free speech that all citizens currently have as a huge infringement on hard-fought and won rights.
82. **Matthew wrote:** Though there need to be limits on what public servants can say about issues directly relating to their department, vague rules leave the impression that they should strictly limit what they say about other topics as well. This reduces the freedom of speech of thousands of Australians. Public debates are poorer without their contribution, and less likely to represent a true cross-section of public opinion. Yet someone like Rupert Murdoch, who isn't even Australian, is free to say what he likes. It should not be a requirement of employment to give up one's freedom of speech entirely, as that would leave public debates entirely to non-wage earners. Therefore, instead of the current lack of clarity, there should be clearer explanation of the boundaries of what isn't allowed, so that public servants feel more comfortable discussing other issues, and can more properly be full participants in their society. The level of public debate on issues that are important to Australia can only benefit.
83. **Shannon wrote:** I think as long as staff do not have their employer listed on their social media bio's and don't post anything that would breach the Anti Discrimination Act they should be allowed to have opinions of current events. We are human beings, who are also impacted by the decisions made by the powers that be. Clearly use common sense and don't outright insult the Government, use slurs etc. Basically, try to express any critique or opinion in a constructive and civil manner. Do not abuse free speech, which we currently lack.
84. **Peter wrote:** My agency has been extremely risk averse in providing advice on making comments which are critical of government. I asked if I could display a political bumper sticker (like "one-term Tony") on my private car and couldn't get a straight answer. I then made a series of comments on Twitter which were deliberately critical of political figures and APS agencies, and asked for an opinion on whether they were within the guidelines. Again, I couldn't get a definitive answer. I was told the

agency relies on employees to refer to social media guidelines and use their best judgment, and that HR would "only get involved when a complaint or suspected misconduct matter is referred to them". So you can see the current situation is that we're basically commenting 'blind', allowing the agency to make a decision on our conduct after the fact. This is clearly unacceptable. APS employees deserve better, and deserve strong protections as Australians. The APS needs to realise criticism can be a good thing.

85. **Shawn wrote:** I certainly believe that having a strong social media policy that makes public servants at least aware of the boundaries of discourse they can engage in on social media is essential. However, actually applying it in real life given the ease by which social media platforms allow individuals to express their innermost thoughts and emotions at a whim is challenging. I consider that have a set of rules suggesting 'fair play' might be one strategy to employ. For example: 1) Don't identify yourself as a public servant on social media 2) Don't comment on your own agency or the work that you undertake as a public servant 3) Respect the gravity by which your words can potentially impact your colleagues and community at large Overall, I would even suggest that not changing the existing social media policy until some more test cases occur where the risks and problems with the current social media approach can be more fully comprehended.
86. **Matthew wrote:** The write-up for this survey explains that you are hoping to make the current rules clearer. That suggests you're aware that many public servants are confused about what kind of opinions they can express on the internet and social media, and in some cases hold back from giving opinions that they're legally entitled to give, for fear of losing their job. There's a logical conclusion to take from this - that this 'open forum' on the internet won't give you a clear picture of what people think, because public servants aren't sure if they can speak here openly and honestly. The results of your own survey are going to be suspect, because the people you're asking for information from have already been silenced, and speak less openly than they're entitled to, because of previous unclear rulings on the issue.
87. **Bearish wrote:** Public servants should be neutral in their work to serve communities and provide expert and balanced advice on their portfolio areas to the government of the day. However the neutrality of the public service is now completely undermined. We are no longer able to present technical advice for political tiers to make informed decisions. We are required to document only what the government of the day will accept. In this context, it is essential that public servants are provided the opportunity to share their insights and opinions outside the work environment. Otherwise public debate on issues cannot be fully informed as often public servants are more knowledgeable than even universities on the technical and practical sides of very sensitive issues.
88. **Peter wrote:** I feel that APS staff should be free to say what they want in a private capacity if they make it clear their views are unrelated to their jobs. Public Servants are not paid for the period of time which falls outside of the standard working day so they should be free to do as they please in their own time. There are already so many other restrictions placed on public servants. You will find that for most public servants it doesn't matter which political party or politician is in Government as we are paid to do a job as lawfully directed. Sure, we may not like the party or the politicians who make up the Government but it doesn't stop us doing our jobs in an impartial manner.
89. **Jeffrey wrote:** The guideline that a post could reasonably be perceived to be in relation to ones employment, is fraught. I recently posted "Australia is going downhill so fast that they should take up skiing". I posted that in relation to a cricket test match which Australia had just lost embarrassingly. However, when I revisited the post at a later date it had been taken in a political direction and contained comment on US President Elect Donald Trump and Australian Senator Pauline Hanson. As I don't always live on social media, someone had to tell me the direction in which it had gone. In general the language the guideline uses is open to interpretation and is drawn too close to a line that says if one is offended then it is offensive. The line should be drawn that as long as a post or an instance of political activity is respectful, not in an explicit relationship to one's own duties or direct employment and law-abiding - it should be allowed
90. **Annette wrote:** ... broadly: a) agency reputation is as much at risk by public comment by consultants (individuals and corporations) and contractors as it is by staff. Therefore, any rules should be applied

to consultants, contractors, APS employees equally. b) 'any public comment' on 'any political issue' is very broad. My submission queries different instances where citizens may expect to be able to engage in public discussion - even in support of government stance. c) LinkedIn is a useful professional social media channel. APS employees should be able to identify themselves as such within LinkedIn. Perhaps advising APS employees to not identify themselves as such on Facebook, Twitter, blogs, gofundme etc. d) It is easy to prohibit any public comment. However, I hope a pragmatic balance can be struck. As it will be difficult to prove a consistent approach is being applied either within agencies or across agencies.

91. **David wrote:** A friend of mine recently got written up for complaining about his new desk on Facebook. The complaint was not unreasonable and was just a typical whinge about work that many Australians might have in private. It did not represent any particular insult on anyone. Yet he was written up for it. What an APS staff member posts on social media outside of work hours or via personal devices should be entirely their own business.
92. **Paula wrote:** The machinery of government, and the politics that go with it, touches almost all areas of a citizen's life in some way. To be unable to comment on political issues is to be unable to comment on life. We currently have a situation where APS employees are afraid to even 'like' a news article that is mildly critical of any policy, due to the vagueness of the social media guidance provided. It is unrealistic to think that anybody will agree with every policy across every department and every area – but disagreeing with a policy in a different department to our own does not mean we cannot do our own jobs impartially, and I don't believe the general public think that either. Refraining from making critical comment about your own department is sensible, as that is more likely to call impartiality into question. However commenting on a different department, agency or policy should be allowed as long as it is not abusive, threatening etc.
93. **Tom wrote:** There are approximately 1.85 million public servants in Australia. If the APS social media policy were to restrict their ability to voice their informed views on matters pertaining to public policy (which they may have a greater interest in than the rest of the population given their employment), the political discussion will be worse for it. As long as they are not voicing their political views under the guise of officialdom, I don't see what the issue is. I agree that perhaps the policy should be stricter for the SES given their higher public profile. I understand that it is important to ensure the impartiality of the public service, but the trade-off in terms of reduced participation of Australians in civic life is too great from a draconian social media policy. As a final aside, public servants are allowed to participate in political activities, including campaigning, so there should not be dissonance between the social media policy and these rules. Thank you for this opportunity
94. **Mat wrote:** If its OK for politicians, lobbyists, media and joe public to express opinions on policy, then it should be OK for public servants to do the same. It would be appropriate for the existing APS values of honesty and integrity to apply, when a public servant makes comment, especially if they are identified as such. Discussing internal details known only through their job is probably likely to be less appropriate, but really this is where judgement is required, valid concerns are about privacy and fair dealings with individuals and organisations. Upsetting political parties because is not a valid concern for a public servant acting in the public interest. If public servants are expected to have high standards, I would expect the same level of accountability for politicians and their staffers.
95. **Bargo wrote:** there is no clarity at all. I am muzzled. I can't say anything to criticise govt policy because who knows how that will be perceived (now or in the future)? If the policy has no relationship to my dept, I should be able to say what I want (I understand it is not always clear cut). If it concerns my dept, there is a legitimate case for the APSC to prevent me from speaking my mind for fear of appearing as though I am not apolitical. Also, pls fix the broken bargaining policy:)
96. **Roderick wrote:** I have concerns with regards 6.2.17 I consider it unreasonable to consider failure to remove or contradict comments made on a blog or social media post as endorsement of those comments. Public servants are not responsible for the opinions or comments of others and may not be aware of such comments having been added to said blog/post. While I am aware of the importance of not being seen to endorse inappropriate comment, association is not necessarily endorsement.

97. **Andrea wrote:** While I understand that there can be quite clear distinctions between what is right and wrong to comment on, I also believe that I shouldn't have to defend myself for making comments on something that I am quite passionate about. I understand that being a APS employee is important and should be respected but what I do outside of work hours and what I support as a member of the community is also just as important to me. I also believe it should not be one rule for one department and a different rule for another. I have worked for my program for over 20 years and have always believed in the work I do so feel I should be able to support that outside of work as well, but in a reasoned and level way. The APSC guidelines also leave a lot of room to question, can I do this? or can I do that?
98. **WD wrote:** It is my opinion that APS employees should be able to voice an opinion or comment on social media and the like other than where it directly relates to one's role in the APS. APS employees should however, in my opinion, ensure to the greatest degree possible that there is no mistaking their opinion as an official departmental/APS view.
99. **Kris wrote:** No topic should be off-topic and all opinions should be welcomed with the proviso that it is constructive discussion. Complaining without an alternate solution to an issue is a waste of everyone's time.
100. **James wrote:** I think the divide between private life and work life should be clearly defined. If I am hired to perform a function for the government, I will perform that function. I will sign an agreement to uphold the government in general and assist the machinery of government, but a contract cannot, and should not, define my opinions or my right to politely and respectfully express them, whether publicly or privately. Caveats obviously apply when representing the government in an official capacity.
101. **Skye wrote:** I believe that Public Servants should get to view their opinion (privately) as long as its done in a respectful way (ie not discriminatory, sexist, abusive etc in nature) and that they have advised that this is their own opinion and does not reflect the department in which they work.
102. **Peter wrote:** APS employees should only be prevented from making public comment if they are easily identifiable as APS employees. For example, if they have identified themselves as such (in close association with the comment in question), or if they are high profile employees. In such situations, a clear disclaimer that the opinions are their own and not that of their employer should be sufficient, assuming the comments are otherwise reasonable.
103. **Alfonso wrote:** Of course we should be able to make comments openly and freely. Doing so does not mean that we are in any manner impaired from doing our jobs with professional integrity. First and foremost we are Australian citizens and members of our communities - and as such we must be able to make comment.
104. **Kerri wrote:** It is important to recognise that, as citizens, public servants should have the right to express an opinion on key political issues providing they do this respectfully and that the issues they are commenting on do not relate directly to their area of employment. Freedom of the press and the right of all citizens to have and express an opinion on political, moral and ethical issues are crucial to maintaining a properly functioning democracy - and notably absent in countries such as Russia and North Korea. From my perspective, the APSC's social media guidelines are on the right track although I would like to see the point that public servants do have the right to comment on political issues outside of their direct work area (and maybe the direct work area of their agency) made more explicit.
105. **Lucy wrote:** So long as there is no link to the individual's place of work then APS staff should be able to comment on matters of importance to them. Where APS staff make a public comment anonymously or pseudonymously there should be no need to add a statement that their views are their own. To do so may reveal more of their identity than leaving such a statement out. Such deliberate obfuscation makes clear that the individual wishes their comments to be read without the contextual influence of their professional standing. APS staff should be able to participate in public discourse online under their own name, provided their social media profile and comments do not state their place of work. If the social media profile is wholly personal then the comments made in that

forum should be considered de jure personal and not professional. There should be no need to attach a disclaimer each time that the views expressed in such a forum are their own.

106. **Kirsten wrote:** At a minimum, public servants should be free to comment on issues that do not relate to the department that they work for.
107. **Paul wrote:** I think that public servants should have a right to express their opinions on matters. As long as they are professional towards their organisation. Case in point, the ongoing agency agreement disputes. Public servants should be able to voice their opinion on the matter, as it directly affects them, and the public only see what the media and politicians say. Under freedom of speech, etc etc. There is no reason why public servants should have to sit in silence, and have no opinion as long as they are being civil about it. Yes, they need to be impartial in their employment, that's a given, but they are human beings and have an opinion.
108. **Joel wrote:** I think it is fair and reasonable if a public servant comments on matters outside of their portfolio agency/Department. Though we are public servants we are citizens too and we have a rightful interest in public policy that affects us. If a public servant's social media comments raise concerns about their impartiality, they should be given the opportunity to respond that it is only their personal view and unrelated to their job. Perhaps if the criticism of the Government is extreme or abusive, they should be given a warning, but I don't think it warrants disciplinary action or firing.
109. **Peter wrote:** I believe that members of the Australian Public Service and Senior Executive Service should never make reference to their agency or their lead portfolio in their social media. That providing the matter is not related to work in their portfolio, that they should be able to comment on other portfolios. Under any circumstance, they should never declare which portfolio they work for. (To do so might add some unwarranted credibility to their postings) I believe that if the disclosure relates to and poses a risk to national security, that the person should immediately lose their job and be taken to court. I believe that this is necessary as members of the public service should display a loyalty to Australia and that should outweigh whatever human rights they think they might have to disclose confidential information that may be useful to people who may seem to be but actually are not friendly to the people of Australia.
110. **Naomi wrote:** I consider that public servants posting in a private capacity should be able to express an opinion as long as it includes a clear disclaimer stating that the opinion they have expressed is purely a statement of their own opinion and not that of their employer and is otherwise lawful. The posting should be expressed in a respectful manner and not be sexist, racist, harassing or menacing.