

Meet the new senior executives



Neil Mann

Three new Deputy Chief Executive Officers (DCEOs) were appointed between September 2006 and September 2007, including the first two women to hold the position of DCEO in Customs.

Neil Mann

Neil Mann is the DCEO Passenger and Trade Facilitation.

Neil is responsible for the delivery of effective Customs border protection while supporting legitimate trade and travel.

His public service career spans 20 years, with 18 years in a variety of roles at the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), including roles in policy, legislation, marketing, public affairs and compliance.

Neil began in a graduate position with the ATO and during his time there held several senior executive positions including Assistant Commissioner Child Support Agency (then a function of the ATO), Deputy Commissioner Small

Business, and Deputy Commissioner Goods and Services Tax

Neil then spent 12 months as a Division head in the Department of Immigration and Citizenship before the opportunity arose to move to Customs. He said the scale of the role at Customs was what most appealed to him.

"Twenty-two million passengers cross our borders each year, millions of containers and bulk commodities... the task Customs officers have of facilitating that movement yet ensuring we protect the borders, collect revenue, and make sure that prohibited and restricted items are properly managed is a huge challenge - and one that from a risk management perspective appealed to me," he said.

"The opportunity to work more closely with industry was another appealing factor—to give our stakeholder groups the confidence that they are being listened to and that their legitimate needs are respected."

"I'm driven by the importance of the outcomes but also in ensuring that the way we achieve them is fair. So while it's easy to think of us as a large organisation doing important things for the community, what probably drives me more is a desire to make sure that the way we touch individuals' lives is fair and appropriate—because without that we'll lose the community's support," he said.

Neil believes it is important to balance the need for change but also maintain a sense of perspective and continuity in the organisation.

"I was always destined to become a public servant. I think the reason most of us work here is that we believe we play an important part in nation building. Contributing to a healthy and well functioning community is a great source of motivation," he said.

Marion Grant

Marion Grant is the DCEO Border Enforcement—and the first woman to be appointed to the rank of DCEO in Customs history.



Above: Marion Grant

Marion is responsible for Customs enforcement and investigations, intelligence and targeting, surveillance and co-ordination of maritime response in the EEZ and adjacent areas, technology research and development, and law enforcement strategy.

Her Customs career spans 23 years and over that time she has come to be well known and highly regarded for her ability to remain in touch with staff at all levels in the organisation.

Marion spent her first 15 years working from base level to Director across six departments—Finance and Health in Brisbane and Treasury, Australian Taxation Office, Industry and Commerce and Customs in Canberra. She has held senior executive positions in Customs since 1994, both in the Trade Facilitation and Border Enforcement areas.

She believes that her career evolved through her seizing opportunities that presented themselves.

"I've always been a self-starter and I think I've made the most of the jobs that I've had," she said.

Marion recalls a time in Customs when women were not quite as well represented in management. In the late 1980s she was one of only four women at the equivalent Level 4 rank in Canberra and the policy of the day required selection committees to have a female panel member.

"You would get people ringing you to ask, 'Would you be able to sit on a selection committee?' And you'd say, 'I'm sorry, I've just spent the last two weeks on a selection committee, I really need to do my own job, but have you rung...,' and you would list the other women at the level."

Today the gender balance in Customs management has shifted.

"The days when women were a minority in senior positions have long since passed us. In Customs, we have a very high representation of women in the Executive Service," she said.

Marion said she has never felt advantaged or disadvantaged by being a woman in a largely male-dominated organisation.

"I think your merit actually gets you where you're going," she said.

Linda Smith

Linda Smith is the DCEO Corporate Operations.

Linda is responsible for Customs finance, information technology, people and place functions, infrastructure, planning, international relations, internal affairs and legal unit as well as project management and co-design.

Linda started her career in public sector finance and administrative areas. With a background in accountancy, she worked her way up from an entry level checking clerk position in the New South Wales public sector to a Chief Finance Officer role in a State Area Health Service. Over time she expanded her roles to include corporate

support services, performance measurement, strategic and business planning as well as direct service delivery roles.

Linda has had extensive experience at a senior level in diverse, complex service delivery organisations in the public sector, particularly in health services. One of her biggest challenges came as Chief Executive Officer of South Metropolitan Area Health Service in Perth, her most recent public sector role.

"There was a very big change agenda, and one of the things we had to do was close a maternity hospital in a very short space of time. We achieved the minister's and the government's requirements in the timeframe with no industrial action and we achieved a great outcome for the community in terms of service delivery," she said.

Linda was attracted to Customs because of the opportunity to contribute at a strategic level to an organisation that has a service delivery impact on all states and territories.

"I like seeing value for money for the taxpayer dollar and I really do like achieving outcomes in line with government requirements."

To do this, Linda believes it is important to empower staff to achieve their potential and perform their role well.

"As a leader I need to listen and learn from the people within the organisation. I think it's important to create an environment where people feel they have the opportunity to put their ideas on the table. Because if people can't have input, you're not going to have a culture of success," she said

Linda is undaunted by being one of only two female DCEOs in Customs history.

"I chose a career path as an accountant when I was much younger that was male dominated as well. I think being appointed to a position on merit is more important. I also think it's important to know where an organisation has come from and to celebrate its history."



Above: Linda Smith