



Sally Johnson

CAHRI

Senior adviser HR capability
Victorian State Services
Authority

U Education

I was born and raised in Melbourne and completed a Bachelor of Applied Science at RMIT in 1986, a Graduate Diploma in Adult Education and Training at the University of Melbourne in 1994 and a Professional Diploma of Human Resources at Deakin University in 2005.

U First job

My career began in 1980 when I accepted a traineeship in medical laboratory science at Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital. For six years I worked full time while attending RMIT three to four nights a week. It was an amazing experience; I don't think a day went by when I didn't learn something new. During that time I did a bit of tutoring which was probably the start of my journey towards learning and development.

I left Fairfield in the late 1980s to take on a senior scientist role at the Red Cross Blood Bank, Victoria. Collectively, I spent just over 20 years working in these two health-sector agencies.

U Why HR?

My move to HR was gradual and not really planned. The transition away from science began in 1994 when I returned

to work after the birth of my second child. I completed my graduate diploma while on maternity leave and moved into a laboratory trainer role, supporting the professional development of more than 100 scientists. From there, I joined the training and development team in HR, where the scope of my role became much broader and included other HR projects and activities.

I've always enjoyed the breadth of opportunities offered in HR as well as working with and learning from people in a range of areas and professional disciplines. Learning and development is a particularly rewarding area to be in. The changes to vocational education and training (VET), and higher education in Australia over the past 10 years have provided some great opportunities for partnership arrangements with industry.

U Current duties

I am currently on a 12-month secondment with the State Services Authority, developing an HR competency framework for the Victorian Public Service. It's part of a larger workforce strategy that is seeking to ensure the future capability and capacity of the service.

Before starting the secondment I worked for five years at the Department of Sustainability and Environment, where I led a learning and development team with responsibilities for delivering outsourced corporate courses, leadership and management development programs, graduate programs and a science cadetship.

U Challenges

The transition from science to HR was one of the biggest challenges I've faced. Among other things I found it hard to leave the security and status offered as a scientist to join an area that, at university in the 1990s, was still subject to debate about its validity as a profession. I am very supportive of AHRI's work in this area.

Like any working mother, work/life balance has also been a significant challenge. A focus on lateral career transitions over the past 10 years or so has helped me build a solid portfolio of skills and experience within a predominantly 8am-5pm work schedule.

U Lessons

One of my passions over the past couple of years has been the development of learning and development reporting frameworks, metrics and benchmarking. Increased capability in this area has helped me to better manage my

HR: A Business Focused Workshop. I also read the *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources* and *hrmonthly* regularly.

In my role I am a member of the Victorian Public Service Learning and Development Network – a representative group of senior L&D practitioners that operates as a community of practice and has been proactive in identifying and delivering value-adding initiatives to the service.

I am a member of the Institute of Public Administration Australia, as I believe I'm more effective in my role if I'm in touch with issues and directions of the public service.

Also, I did a leadership program this year, which gave me the chance to build on my existing skills and connect with issues faced by leaders from other industries.

U 10-year plan

I still haven't got my head around the fact that my children will be well into their 20s in

I've always enjoyed the breadth of opportunities offered in HR as well as working with and learning from people...

function and get learning and development on the agenda of senior leaders. I enjoyed the challenge of applying a scientific, evidence-based approach to resolve an HR problem.

U Professional development

I actively participate in AHRI events and recently went to the

10 years' time. The changes in my personal life will allow me to consider a wider range of career options. I'd also like to take on some further formal study. I don't think I will leave the public sector because of the opportunities it provides to make a difference.

Sally Johnson spoke with Bridget Cull.