

# APS 5-6 CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

DEVELOP ESSENTIAL CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AND PROBLEM SOLVING ABILITIES REQUIRED OF APS 5-6 OFFICERS

1 - 2  
**JUNE 2021**

ONLINE DELIVERY

## EXPLORE

- ▶ Apply practical outcome-driven models for critical thinking and problem solving
- ▶ Unpack critical thinking as a mental process and set of action steps to address everyday problems
- ▶ Use a structured systems thinking approach to analysing problems and designing solutions
- ▶ Expand your perspective and deepen your understanding of issues and problems impacting your work
- ▶ Improve your contribution to better decision making through rational thinking and analysis
- ▶ Understand team dynamics in problem solving and how to work with others in the process
- ▶ How to work with data, ask the right questions and gain insight from information
- ▶ Leverage the skills of creative and lateral thinking in complex problem solving
- ▶ Implement and test solutions to problems and track progress
- ▶ Overcome common roadblocks to critical thinking and problem solving

## EXPERT FACILITATOR



**Garry Mills**  
Presenter & Coach  
Garry Mills Peak Performance

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# ABOUT THE EVENT

Aimed at APS 5-6 level officers and management, this two-day workshop will provide an opportunity to advance critical thinking and problem solving capabilities expected of APS 5-6 level officers.

Critical thinking and problem solving have been identified as key skills required of officers at many levels of the APS. In an environment where evidence is paramount, this highly valued skill set will become a key differentiator among high performing leaders of the future. Critical thinking is at the heart of effective problem solving and decision making at any level of management. As an APS5 - 6 level officer you are at the ideal level to establish core skills in this domain.

We have developed this practical training program to kick start your journey to becoming a discerning critical thinker and seasoned problem solver. Through this workshop, participants will have the opportunity to examine, assess, and reconstruct their way of thinking in order to solve everyday problems. If you find that a problem has you stuck, unable to evolve or adapt to changes, it may be time to try a new approach. Developing your skills in critical thinking and applying innovative problem solving techniques can help you to make better decisions and overcome the challenges that you face.

Participants will learn practical skills and techniques to critically appraise problems and understand their root causes and impacts. Through a systematic approach you will be able to develop evidence-based solutions to problems as well as plan and prepare strong arguments for change and improvement.

## DAY ONE

### **Critical thinking and problem solving as a key priority in the APS**

- ▶ Review the current context and landscape for problem solving in the APS
- ▶ Why problem solving has been identified as a top skill priority across all levels of the APS
- ▶ How critical thinking provides the necessary lens to frame problems rationally and produce evidence-based solutions
- ▶ How problem solving ability could drive your career advancement in 2021 and beyond

### **Unpacking critical thinking techniques**

- ▶ The cognitive principles, tools and strategies essential to critical thinking
- ▶ Reviewing critical thinking tools and taking stock of our own limitations and strengths
- ▶ How to think like a scientist - Learning how to objectively collect and evaluate evidence
- ▶ Whole brain thinking; exploring creative thinking for generating new ideas and links, acting on intuition, imagining possibilities and connecting ideas through considering alternatives
- ▶ Understanding the barriers to sense-making and thinking rationally

### **Problem solving methods and key tools**

- ▶ Reviewing common types of problems
- ▶ Exploring linear / non-linear and logic based approaches to problem solving
- ▶ Root cause analysis - getting to the heart of the problem
- ▶ Mapping known and considering unknown variables
- ▶ How to select the right method and apply specific tools to solve a problem
- ▶ Explore how Systems Thinking is applied to provide clarity around root causes, interdependencies, possible constraints and outcomes
- ▶ Creating a process map or mind map to provide clarity around the problem
- ▶ Creative problem solving techniques and activities: Abstract questioning, brainstorming, role switching, visualisation, ideation and process re-mapping

### **Working with others on problem solving**

- ▶ Facilitating a shared understanding of issues and problems
- ▶ Learn to prepare and present powerful evidence-based arguments and solutions
- ▶ Resolving conflict and challenges in group problem solving

## DAY TWO

### **Definition: Understanding the problem**

- ▶ Agreeing on the reality of the problem: Definition of key variables: known causal factors, structure, scope, stakeholder impact, interdependencies and constraints
- ▶ Evaluating problem impacts
- ▶ Consider solution criteria and problem solving deliverables

### **Analysis: Identifying and evaluating possible solutions**

- ▶ Evaluate solutions based on feasibility, impact and risk
- ▶ How to approach complex or 'wicked problems' (problems resistant to conventional resolution)
- ▶ Review tools, priorities and resources available (including expertise)

### **Implementation: The problem solving process in action**

- ▶ Approaching the problem solving process as a system, applying a critical thinking lens at all stages, consider:
  - ▶ Problem identification, detection or framing
  - ▶ Analysis of variables, root-cause analysis and interdependencies
  - ▶ Design of possible solutions, opportunities or courses of action
  - ▶ Evaluation and selection of solution
  - ▶ Consideration of risk, including feasibility, uncertainty / error
  - ▶ Decision on Implementation
  - ▶ Deployment of solution
  - ▶ Monitoring, learning and evaluation

### **Overcoming the roadblocks to critical thinking and problem solving**

- ▶ Cognitive biases, ideological conflict and problems arising in groups
- ▶ Observation blind-spots and measurement errors
- ▶ The inherently challenging nature of 'wicked problems'
- ▶ Cultivating your skills and maintaining your edge as a critical thinker

## YOUR FACILITATOR

Garry is a former bodyguard to the Australian Prime Minister and other world leaders, leading complex operations both in Australia and overseas. His experience and expertise include police officer, public sector executive, Team Australia athlete in an international TV series competition, radio presenter, and Ironman triathlete. Garry delivers high performance, mental health & leadership workshops, 1:1 coaching and presentations across Australia and overseas. Garry is a certified i4 neuroleader trainer and a qualified coach, using neuroscience, evidence-based research and personal experiences in his programs. His clients include senior executives, professional athletes and small business owners.



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## WHO WILL ATTEND?

Aspiring, emerging and existing leaders across all disciplines and departments throughout the Public Sector, including:

- ▶ APS 5-6
- ▶ Officers
- ▶ Senior Officers
- ▶ Principal Officers
- ▶ Advisors
- ▶ Senior Advisors

