THE FUTURE COURSE OF MODERN GOVERNMENT AN IPAA POLICY PAPER

(April 2011[1])

"We need a new way to create public goods that take their lead from the culture of self-organisation and participation emerging from the Web that forms a central part of modern culture, especially for young consumers and future citizens.

Increasingly the state cannot deliver collective solutions from on high: it is too cumbersome and distant. The state can help to create public goods – like better education and health - by encouraging them to emerge from within society. The tax system increasingly depends on mass involvement in self-assessment and reporting. Welfare to work and active labour market programmes depend on the user as a participant, who takes responsibility for building up their skills and contacts. Neighbourhood renewal has to come from within localities, it cannot be delivered top down from the state. Public goods are rarely created by the state alone but by cumulative changes in private behaviour."

*Charles Leadbeater and Hillary Cottam: **The User Generated State – Public Services 2.0***

Highlights

1. In the face of risks and opportunities of unprecedented complexity, scale and unpredictability, our public sector systems and institutions need considerable reform and renewal.

2. IPAA agrees with the UK Public Services 2020 Commission that a combination of long term demand, fiscal constraint and outcome failures have brought public services to a critical moment. But just as society has changed, so have the means that can be used to create value for citizens through public services. Many of these are driven by how technology enhances our lives.

3. Reforms should reinforce important attributes of open, accountable, fair and ethical government. They must harness the tools and capabilities especially of interactive and social technologies of "Web 2.0", to deliver the mix of better policy, improved services and new levels of citizen engagement and participation that are the hallmarks of good government in a more open and connected world.

4. Some of the changes will confront politicians and bureaucrats with uncomfortable implications for a new culture of government, infusing enduring values of public service with new patterns of power, control and accountability.

5. The next wave of public sector reforms will be formed around distributed systems, rather than centralised structures. The challenge for governments is to deal with complexity not by standardisation and simplification imposed from the centre, but by distributing complexity to the margins. The role of the citizen changes from passive recipient to active contributor in the development of policies and improved public services.

6. Increasingly, modern government has to adjust to a world in which access to power and authority and the capacity to make a difference are a function of the way people connect and collaborate to share ideas, knowledge and commitment. Organisations and institutions will always be important, but only if they engage with the networks and communities around them.

---

[1] This IPAA Policy Paper was prepared by its Submissions Standing Committee. The paper's principal author was Martin Stewart-Weeks who obtained input from other members of the Committee including Percy Allan, Andrew Podger, Lynne Tacy and Mark MacDonald.

7. Promoting participation in service design and delivery should be at the heart of a new agenda. Participation should unlock the solution to more effective, personalised solutions that deliver value at lower unit cost than top-down professional services.

8. IPAA believes that a legitimate and rising interest in new models of citizen engagement should not detract from the persistent role of government in market economies, including the use of coercive power to address certain public goods or market failures for example.

9. Improving public services will balance earlier models of contestability and competition with the use of social media which, made possible by the Internet and drawing on instincts for open and collaborative communication, could unleash more powerful assessments of public service failures. This kind of feedback has the potential to get wide publicity that can embarrass politicians and public servants into action.

10. Solving public problems needs new combinations of experience and insight. Access to convenient and appealing ways to talk, argue, design, test and then scale solutions is at a premium. Open and connected governance assumes an ability to rapidly find people, connect them in purposeful conversations, give them access to the right mix of knowledge and ideas (to which they will often contribute) and keep them working productively in complex coalitions.

11. The people and the expertise that contribute to good policy and service design will be anywhere and everywhere. Often, they won't be in large institutions or traditional organisations, private, public or community. They will be in smaller, more distributed networks which come together to solve problems or share ideas.

12. For the most part, more and more public services should be designed, delivered and evaluated with an open invitation for appropriate participation by those experiencing or delivering the service.

13. However complex and 'wicked' the problems which call on our collective wisdom, we still want public servants to be efficient and responsive, striving to achieve the best results for the Australian community. And we still want them to perform impartially and in the public interest, providing advice that is frank, honest, timely and informed.

14. At a broader level, the exclusive franchise nature of most of the general government sector is fundamental to understanding the often self-serving producer-focused rather than external client oriented culture. Previous reform programs, including the new public management model, tried to solve this by contracting or outsourcing public services to contestable suppliers of which the Job Network a significant example.

15. In the current context, the advent and rapid spread of social media is going to be powerful as another way of shifting the focus back to citizens and service users. Social media is likely to be both useful and effective in increasing pressure on agencies to better structure their surveying of client needs and satisfactions.

16. Among other proposals, IPAA recommends that the federal Government adopts the initiatives outlined in the Government 2.0 Task Force Report, that agencies should experiment with "crowdsourced" methods for better input by staff and service users for service design and policy innovation and explore new models of accountability for more open and networked model of government and public policy.

Introduction

Governments and communities around the world face a range of risks and opportunities of unprecedented scale and complexity, the solutions to which need to be qualitatively different from those we have attempted in the past.

In Australia, this combination of complexity, scale and unpredictability is testing many of the current models and methods of government and the business processes and systems on which they rely. Without considerable reform and renewal, they will be increasingly unable to deliver the mix of better policy, improved services and new levels of engagement and participation that are the hallmarks of good government in a more open and connected world.

This IPAA policy paper addresses some fundamental issues and challenges facing governments in Australia and puts forward some principles and recommendations to guide their response.

The paper recognizes that, while there is some fundamental re-thinking about public sector performance implied in some of the changes it deals with, those changes build upon the past rather than necessarily replace existing systems and proven practices. Some of these systems and practices will disappear over time, but there are perennial public administration challenges which any new public governance and management frameworks have to accommodate. These include the need to balance complex and often contested notions of the public good, the ability to adjudicate between different and sometimes clashing interests and values and the need always to ensure systems of public management that are open, equitable, fair and transparent. These sometimes uncomfortable tensions are reinforced in the *Ahead of the Game* report (Blueprint for the Reform of Australian Government Administration, March 2010) which calls out the critical stewardship function of public sector leadership. That includes building a culture of innovation and integrity in policy advice (p5) and a culture of collaboration (p45).

The paper reinforces the sense that something important and potentially very exciting is happening to our systems of public management, without eroding the legitimacy of the larger frames of theory and good practice to which they represent an important and valuable contribution.

The paper includes some discussion of the convergence between reforms under first the eGovernment and, more recently, the Government 2.0 banners and larger programs of public sector reform.

Some of the necessary changes will confront politicians and bureaucrats with uncomfortable implications for a new culture of government, infusing enduring values of public service with new patterns of power, control and accountability.

At the same time, they herald transitions with considerable opportunity for a more robust model of participation for better services, better and more effective policy and a capacity to repair the bonds of trust between citizens and governments.

1: Issues and context

A recent description of the modern economy[2] suggests it is increasingly "formed around distributed systems, rather than centralised structures. It handles complexity not by standardisation and simplification imposed from the centre, but by distributing complexity to the margins – to the local managers and workers on the shop floor, as well as to the consumers themselves. As a result, the role of the consumer changes from a passive to an active player: to a producer in their own right."

---

[2] "The Open Book of Social Innovation" by the Young Foundation
http://www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/Social_Innovator_020310.pdf

With a few changes, it is a description that could be pressed into service as a summary of a new governance, which is showing itself increasingly to be similarly:

> "… formed around distributed systems, rather than centralised structures. It handles complexity not by standardisation and simplification imposed from the centre, but by distributing complexity to the margins – to families and communities, as well as to the citizens themselves. As a result, the role of the citizen changes from a passive to an active player: to government in their own right."[3]

Leadbeater and Cottam's description of what they call the "user generated" state, or "Public Services 2.0", picks up the theme of distributed knowledge and the premium on engagement and participation. They claim that "as technology lowers barriers to entry people are slowly finding their voice. The people we used to call the audience are taking to the stage, or at least the stages they want to set up."

The risk, they suggest, is that a public sector that fails to harness the "power of user generated content" will start to look outdated. There is now another big challenge: to make public services as participative, communal and collective as the best of what is emerging from the new collaborative culture. "That is why in future every public service must carry with it an invitation to participate."

But "an invitation to participate" offers a convenient shorthand for a series of related structure, culture and technology shifts that are already underway to reform the public sector and change the way we govern. How governments use and release information, how well they master the new arts of authentic collaboration within and between their own agencies, and how comfortably they adjust to the new conversations with more active and informed citizens will determine the extent to which the public sector, as it evolves its values and capabilities into an uncertain and volatile world, remains relevant and therefore respected.

> "…a need for more effective ways to shift at least some of the power and control over service design and delivery from producers to consumers."

That doesn't necessarily mean that every citizen receiving a service from the government always wants to be involved in service design and delivery issues. Service users will have varying appetites for participation in collaboration processes that go much further than a satisfaction survey. It will depend very much on the service context and the degree to which the service represents a major part of their lives.

Some of the work done by UK organisation *In Control,* for example (http://www.in-control.org.uk/), which has been replicated to some extent in services for people with disabilities in Western Australia, provides practical ways for service users to experience not just a more influential role in service design, but greater autonomy in service use. Different approaches to direct funding to clients or their carers and the creation of more competitive markets for service providers are amongst the tools already being used to turn "collaboration" into more direct engagement with clients.

The underlying challenge reflects a need for more effective ways to shift at least some of the power and control over service design and delivery from producers to consumers. That is powerfully present as a theme in new thinking about public services, for example the Public Services 2020 Commission in the UK (http://www.2020publicservicestrust.org/ and the work around the "user generated state".

At the heart of many of these insights is the primacy of relationships over structures. This is not a new insight. The importance of relationships has been central to the literature on leadership and values in public management for the past 20 years. Thinkers and practitioners alike have long worried about the best way to harness effective relationships within agencies, and between government and citizens, to manage change, to promote agility and flexibility in order to focus on results.

---

[3] This reference was drawn from work by Dimitri Zenghelis, a colleague in Cisco's Internet Business Solutions Group of principal author Martin Stewart-Weeks

What is perhaps new is that, especially under the influence of developments in technology, in particular the rapid rise and spread of social networking, some of the relationships we are witnessing in the work of government and public policy are having a more profound impact on the structure, performance and accountability of many traditional service delivery and policy processes. This is an issue the paper revisits in a later section.

Increasingly, modern government has to adjust to a world in which power and authority and the capacity to make a difference are a function of the way people connect and collaborate to share ideas, knowledge and commitment. Think of the examples of new methods of collective action, fuelled by imaginative uses of social media, which have emerged in the "Arab spring" of popular uprisings in the Middle East. Less spectacular but just as compelling is an initiative like *Fix My Street* (www.fixmystreet.org) which connects citizens and governments in simple ways to make it easier to identify, and then fix, things that have gone wrong or causing a problem in a local neighbourhood.

In a world where it is increasingly cheap, easy and effective to "organize without organisations"[4], the ability to get things done in government – deliver services, create effective policy responses to complex problems, fashion better regulatory frameworks – is a function of the quality of relationships within government, between government and citizens and between citizens themselves. Organisations and institutions will always be important, but only if they engage with the networks and communities around them. NATO, for example, recently conducted a "policy jam" in which 4000 people in 124 countries across 5 days engaged in intense, facilitated online and virtual discussion about what priorities should guide NATO's thinking on future policy for Western security. [5]

An example of earlier work that resonates with these values is John Braithwaite's work which opened up the idea of 'tiered regulation' (see for example *Global Business Regulation*, John Braithwaite and Peter Drahos, Cambridge University Press, 2000). This approach pushed out much of the detailed regulation activity, whether in tax collection, aged care, environmental management, food safety for example to the operating fringe. The intention was to close the gap between regulatory authorities and designers and those subject to regulation. Broad principles could be set at the centre with layered approaches to oversight that harnessed a more distributed model. As well as harnessing the power of relationships, this is a model that started to rethink the relationship between "centre" and "edge" in public policy, which is a key underlying trend in some of the new models of public governance and management.

The Public Services 2020 Commission in the UK[6] puts this new understanding about the value in public services at the heart of its vision for public service. "Our understanding of how value is created from services has matured," the Commission writes in its final report (p22). "Rather than viewing public services as though they were goods – complete 'things' that are presented to service users – services might better be seen as 'value propositions', where actual value is co-created in the relationship between provider and user."

The Commission advocates a complete rethink of the way we conceive of, and design, public services based on an ideas it describes as "social productivity". Social productivity is "active engagement with citizens to foster improved social outcomes together, through a variety of means." The Commission calls out three mutually reinforcing shifts in culture, power and finance to "open up space for new, bottom-up approaches to solving public problems so that policy makers are not drawn back towards the old solutions". (p26)

---

[4] *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organising without Organisations*, Clay Shirky, Penguin 2008

[5] http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/06/world/europe/06nato.html

[6] *From social security to social productivity: a vision for 2020 Public Services*. Final Report of the Commission on 2020 Public Services, 2020 Public Services Trust at the RSA, 2010

And the call for a new spirit to animate fundamental public sector reform derives from a larger view of the historical moment which seems to demand it. "We have argued," the Commission writes, "that a combination of long term demand, fiscal constraint and outcome failures have brought public services to a critical moment. But, just as society has changed, so have the means that can be used to create value for citizens through public services. Many of these are driven by how technology enhances our lives." (p22)

The Commission believes the direction of reform is clear. "Once we reverse our traditional state-down, service-down ways of viewing problems and their solutions," its report argues, "some very radical propositions start to emerge: services built around individuals and communities; information empowering citizens; public services engaging and developing our existing capabilities and resources. (p46)

The "public services 2.0" frame reinforces the insight. Leadbeater and Cottam agree that "for the past decade most of the debate about public service reform has focused on delivery, making the public sector value chain work more efficiently, to resemble reliable private service delivery. But you cannot deliver complex public goods the way that Fed Ex delivers a parcel. They need to be co-created."

This is what leads to the provocative concept of a "user generated state". The emerging business models in media and music, for example, rely on insights and resources from users themselves. They "enlist users as participants and producers at least some of the time: they move from consuming content, watching and listening, to sharing, rating, ranking, amending, adding."

In the user generated state, new approaches will "motivate people to want to help themselves and one another. Public services must not just serve people but motivate them to want to do more for themselves." Promoting participation should be at the heart of a new agenda, but "not participation in formal meetings or governance but participation in service design and delivery." The promise is that participation unlocks the solution to more effective, personalised solutions that deliver value at lower unit cost than top down professional services.

These insights offer important design principles for a model of modern government capable of responding to a policy and services agenda crowded with risks and opportunities that are large, complex and interconnected.

The list is often rehearsed and increasingly familiar – climate change and the shift to low-carbon growth, making our crowded cities more sustainable, tackling obesity and a range of lifestyle-related health and wellbeing risks, reducing the pressure on strained and expensive health systems as a time when many populations around the world, and certainly in Australia, are growing older.

As well, government confronts some big cross-cutting challenges. How does Australia incubate deep cultural habits of creativity and innovation? And how do those instincts for a more effective practice of innovation become entrenched in the culture and practice of the public sector itself? How do problem-solving strategies take advantage of the new tools and capabilities of crowdsourcing so that immanent experience and insight makes a difference at the right place and at the right time?

As the risks and opportunities become more complex and interconnected, government is discovering the limits of its reach. Where once we assumed there were few problems to which the scale, authority and resources of government could not provide the solution, now we tend to assume almost exactly the opposite. In many situations, though, the question is not whether government should be involved in the solution, but rather how it should engage its institutional authority and significant resources to combine with others to find sustainable solutions and viable responses.

According to one analysis, the problem is that we've failed to equip public servants and public institutions with a suitable aligned mandate, set of tools and permission to innovate.

A new theory of the business
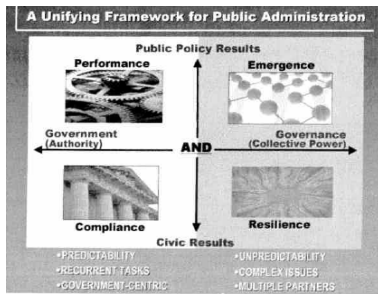
This argument suggests that the public sector has traditionally been good at the "performance" and "compliance" dimensions of operational, often large scale and transactional functions. But it often lacks the tools, relationships and even sometimes the mandate to confront problems to which new capabilities for "resilience" and "emergence" are increasingly required.[7]

This offers one way of conceptualizing a new framework for modern government. The 'new synthesis' offers some provocative prescriptions for "serving beyond the predictable" as the basis for a modern and capable public sector.

It recognises that the traditional focus of public administration on compliance and performance remains vital. If anything, the new turbulence and complexity through which public administration leaders and practitioners are navigating will make more demands, not less, on these traditional skills and capabilities.

But those same conditions are generating new demands on public administration systems driven by a rising tide of complex, 'wicked' problems (and opportunities) to which governments are expected to respond. As urbanisation rises, for example, how can cities continue to grow and provide liveable spaces and, at the same time, reduce their carbon footprint? How do long-standing aspirations for new collaborative models of education and skills turn into practical new platforms for lifelong learning? How do we design, fund and maintain the new infrastructure for better natural resource management that also improves environmental sustainability?

Here, the need is for values, beliefs, systems, behaviours and structures in the public realm capable of creating resilience in national economic and social systems and pre-empting problems by becoming more effective at sensing, and gearing up for, new challenges.

The "new synthesis" framework is also based on the assumption that the focus on "emergence" and "resilience" does not deny the importance of traditional concerns with "performance" and "compliance". What emerges is the outline of a more complex public administration practice that 'cycles through' these different models, combining their strengths and capabilities to suit different public governance and management demands

As well, the framework accepts that good outcomes are a function not only of the authority of government itself as an institution, but of the looser, but equally important authority of collective governance that includes a wider mix of people and communities. Similarly, achieving good policy results has to be combined with the ability to bring people and communities with you, to achieve good 'civic' results as well. Civic authority is as important often as traditional governance or public sector authority.

Rhodes has noted that a growing reliance on more networked and distributed models of governance and accountability does not necessarily mean a replacement of hierarchies and traditional accountability structures. Rather, it often added an overlay which then has to work with, and reinforce, those existing structures. (See for example Rhodes, R A W and Bevir, M (2007) *Decentred theory, change and network governance.* In: <u>Democratic Theories of Network Governance</u>. Palgrave-Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke and Rhodes, R.A.W., (1996). "<u>The New Governance: Governing without Government,"</u> *Political Studies* XLIV:652-667).

---

[7] (http://www.ns6newsynthesis.com/; *The New Frontiers of Public Administration: The New Synthesis Project,* Jocelyne Bourgon, Public Governance International and University of Waterloo, 2010 - http://www.ns6newsynthesis.com/documents/new_frontierspdf)

The Management Advisory Committee Report on *Connecting Government* similarly warned against trying to link everything to everything else all of the time. Connectedness may well be increasingly pervasive but it is always tempered by functions that harness more traditional models.[8]

What these analyses reinforce is the importance of matching the new demands of a more complex and nuanced contemporary public administration practice with the necessary underlying values and culture on which public servants need to draw to be effective in the new conditions.

Also, IPAA believes that a legitimate and rising interest in new models of citizen engagement should not detract from the persistent role of government in market economies, including the use of coercive power to address certain public goods or market failures for example. Those expectations have been on obvious display during the global financial crisis and its aftermath. Neither should it avoid the challenge of balancing politics and administration or the need to be both efficient and effective. These are enduring ambiguities of effective public work that are not dissolved by successive waves of theory and new reform programs. Making sure that these constraints are properly recognized in new models of public governance and management may limit some of the more ambitious application of new methods and reforms.

The "new synthesis" framework is not, of course, the only way to think about the challenges of public sector reform. But it provides a useful ways of thinking about some of the fundamental capabilities that need to emerge at the heart of a new public administration model.

The ability to orchestrate the contribution and knowledge of a more complex mix of people, interests and organisations as the basis for good policy and better services is one of them. But the point is not simply to collect more data, more feedback or to search out more expert opinion. The point is to be able to make sense of the output from what has become a "massive multiplayer game" and to turn that into useful and actionable insights. The point is not just to know more but to act better.

There are three assumptions in particular that will likely become more significant as technology capabilities and the challenges of public administration reform become increasingly interdependent.

Information and knowledge

The first assumption is that information and knowledge are critical. There is little new about that, of course. Knowledge and information have been the currency of good government pretty much since government was invented.

What has changed, perhaps, is the complexity of information which is being generated inside and outside government and the pace at which it is being created and used.

Technology is partly to blame for that, of course. Just think of the proliferating tools and platforms on which people now work to create or work with information – email, blogs, Twitter, millions of websites and so on. But technology is also part of the solution. It helps to track, find, integrate and connect communities of knowledge and influence which it empowers.

It is impossible to engage the information demands of government, whether it is in pursuit of goals and outcomes in relation to performance, compliance, resilience or emergence without the tools and platforms that technology now provides.

Transparency

A second assumption is the growing expectation of higher levels of transparency as the basis for accountability and trust.

---

[8] http://www.apsc.gov.au/mac/connectinggovernment.htm

Either directly or through a rapidly growing array of intermediaries, citizens want to 'see' more of the business of governing than they ever have in the past. It's not just about the integrity and fairness of process, which remain enduring hallmarks of good governance. But the desire for transparency goes beyond a suitable obsession with due process.

It is about understanding how governments make decisions and come to conclusions that translate into investment, regulation or other actions that impact people's lives. The transparency imperative, which has been amplified by the technologies that make it easier for public work to be made visible and rapidly shared across the country or around the world, can also be harnessed to lift the quality of policy and community debate.

It can make more open the kinds of complex trade-offs at the heart of the big policy challenges governments face. Initiatives like community budgeting are exercises in both greater transparency and building community knowledge and expertise which, in turn, to improve the way decisions are debated in the first place and a consensus formed on which to act.

Collaboration

The third assumption is the rapid growth of collaboration as a core capability of the new public administration.

> In the new balance between centre and edge, the edge will be more powerful and capable, enabled by the new tools and behaviours of the social networking world. People at the edge are not waiting to be invited to participate. They want to be part of a process of debate and deliberation whose terms and conditions can no longer be unilaterally set or easily controlled by the centre.

A bit like information itself, collaboration has always been a function of good government (although it hasn't always been done well, of course). But some things have changed. There are just more people to listen to, and talk with and many more spaces and places in which to do both. That quickens the pace at which collaboration needs to happen. Issues move fast and change quickly and the capacity to contribute is now so easy and ubiquitous that collaboration is now a game with very different and demanding rules. None of that erodes the equally compelling imperative for deliberation, discernment and judgment, which often move to the beat of a different and less frenetic drum.

But more than that, the nature of many of the more complex and 'wicked' problems to which governments have to address themselves demand a mix of knowledge, experience and insight that is always going to be beyond the reach of government on its own. That puts a new premium on the ability to find the right experts, wherever they might be, and bring their expertise to bear on solving problems and creating new ideas at just the right time.

As well, there is a renewed (if somewhat belated and not always sincere) interest in drawing more heavily on the insights of citizens themselves, especially where they have direct and often highly 'expert' experience of services.

An example is the Patient Opinion website, established by a GP in Britain who wanted to find a way for National Health Service patients to be able to share their experience of the care they received in the British health system. (http://www.patientopinion.org.uk/; "Your story can change the NHS")

Patient Opinion, and other Web 2.0 models of customer feedback and participation, raise important questions about how the public sector becomes more genuinely "citizen centric" in its operations and the design and delivery of services.

The monopoly nature of most public services has bred an inward-looking, rather than an outward-looking perspective. The question is what will be the catalyst for changing that culture to a citizen centric one, where public servants have no choice but to take clients and the needs, insights and expertise of service users, more seriously.

The New Public Management tended to see the solution in terms of introducing contestability to public services. Early evidence suggests that the advent of social media could unleash more powerful individual and cumulative assessments of public service failures, often in real time or close to the "moment of truth" when a service is experienced. This kind of feedback has the potential to get wide publicity that can embarrass politicians and public servants into action. The recent difficulties in the home insulation scheme provide one example. Once one fatality received publicity, people used various social media to immediately indentify and make known other deaths. This stream of instant "citizen journalism" then fed into traditional mass media channels which then followed up the stories.

More broadly, the exclusive franchise model of public services production, which tends to reflect a producer-focused rather than a citizen-centric culture, could rapidly be undermined by changes to client empowerment made possible by the new social media.

This shift then flows into other aspect of public management. For example, the traditional model where agencies set their own goals, measured their performance against them and then published the results in their annual report has rarely fired the public imagination as a form of accessible accountability. The NSW Council on the Cost and Quality of Government, then chaired by current IPAA National President Percy Allan, took a whole of government approach by launching the annual *NSW Review of Government Services Report* in 2000 (which the Santa Fe Fiscal Policies Institute described as the boldest experiment of its type in the world).

The report, which published comprehensive and detailed historical KPIs on each government agency, lasted for 5 years. It attracted little media attention and even less interest from the public. Subsequent research suggested that few citizens are interested in how an agency performs as a whole. Their interest is usually confined to individual services from particular delivery points which they or their families personally access.

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair explored these challenges with the introduction of league tables for individual services by individual delivery sites (e.g. schools, hospitals, police stations, etc). Similarly, the Canadian Citizen First initiative[9] has gone further in scoring and benchmarking client satisfaction across national, state and local governments by individual services. This model in particular could be explored for adoption in Australia.

> …trust, competence and innovation are increasingly interdependent in a virtuous cycle that lifts performance and fuels legitimacy.

A slightly different approach to a citizen-centric approach to public services design is the Southwark Circle initiative in London[10]. A project that started as a fairly standard review of local council aged care services quickly was re-framed by understanding deeply the lived experience of older people and their aspiration for participation and connection.

Rather than proposing a new set of traditional public services, the project establish the Circle as a way of connecting older people to others in their community, and to each other, to provide the connection and engagement they said they wanted. The Circle provides a range of services and points of contact for older people, from getting shopping and gardening done to small household chores to simply making sure people didn't go too long without someone to talk to. In that sense, the older people themselves became the service in many ways, organising with both traditional and online tools to be better connected and more in touch across their streets and neighbourhoods.

---

[9] http://www.iccs-isac.org/en/cf

[10] http://www.southwarkcircle.org.uk/

Solving public problems needs new combinations of experience and insight. Access to convenient and appealing ways to talk, argue, design, test and then scale solutions is at a premium. Open and connected governance assumes an ability to rapidly find people, connect them in purposeful conversations, give them access to the right mix of knowledge and ideas (to which they will often contribute) and to keep them working productively in ever more complex coalitions of interest and practice.

There is a risk in all of this that if citizen engagement and participation are seen as good, then more citizen engagement and participation is presumably better. The truth is that, while the instinct to engage and the opportunity to have a say and be heard will always be important, how and in what context the tools of engagement get used need to be carefully thought through.

It's also true that not all policy implementation and service delivery issues deal with matters where the service recipients or citizens can have either too much influence or decision making power. Clearly, where people are "involuntary" customers – think of citizens as taxpayers or people in the criminal justice system for example – there will be considerations of service quality, equity and consistency that will go beyond the specific needs of those currently in those systems.

The people and the expertise that can contribute to good policy and service design outcomes will be anywhere and everywhere. Often, they won't be in large institutions or traditional organisations, private, public or community. They will be in smaller, more distributed networks which come together to solve problems or share ideas. Much of the invention and inspiration for change will not be found at the centre of large bureaucratic and service systems, but rather at the edge where people live and work and receive services. The confidence to learn by sharing is often nurtured in these small, highly local but also highly connected places and communities where trust and tolerance for diversity and intelligent failure are both high. Social capital fuels innovation.

Not all service design and delivery issues will present themselves as opportunities with value in or scope for local, distributed flexibility and therefore greater citizen choice and voice. This approach might work well for programs or services dealing with challenges of social disadvantage where the questions are about how to package up different approaches and service bundles to meet the needs of particular communities or groups of citizens.

But some policy implementation issues which call for equity and consistency (eg passport controls, level of social security benefits across particular classes of citizens to take two examples) may not be so open to innovation and the kind of flexibility that high levels of local collaboration and input might suggest. That doesn't mean there is no scope for meaningful citizen engagement and input in the development of overall approaches and policy responses. In fact, it's likely that the acceptability of the outcome of such policy deliberations will be a function, at least in some measure, of the degree to which they reflect the experience of those consuming, as well as those delivering, the service. And there is always scope for better and more effective feedback from, and listening to, the insights of real user experience.

But this kind of engagement will necessarily be of a different order and focus. Consistent application will be valued by citizens so the challenge becomes how to maximise public value in these settings too. The general point is that, for the most part, more and more public services should be designed, delivered and evaluated with an open invitation for appropriate participation by those experiencing or delivering the service. This is one especially important way in which the "centre" has to learn to listen to, and be more engaged with, the "edge" across complex service systems. .

What this discussion reinforces is that, notwithstanding the potentially transformative nature of some of the changes opening up policy design and service delivery, enduring and hard-won values of public service remain central to the role that a professional and effective public service can play in good government.

A public service that is ethical, professional, non-partisan, capable of protecting a wider sense of public good and consistency as well as good service is no less important now than it has ever been.

Few will argue that, no matter how complex and 'wicked' the problems are which call on our collective wisdom, we still want public servants to be efficient and responsive, striving to achieve the best results for the Australian community. And we still want them to perform impartially and in the public interest, providing advice that is frank, honest, timely and informed.

The fact remains that the circumstances which governments and the public sector around the world are now facing demand a network-centric way of working and organizing that imply an increasingly central role for more effective platforms of communication and collaboration.

So the new wave of reform and renewal in the public sector will emerge with two distinct characteristics:

- In the **new balance between centre and edge**, the edge will be more powerful and capable, enabled by the tools and behaviours of the social networking world. People at the edge are not waiting to be invited to participate. They want to be part of a process of debate and deliberation whose terms and conditions can no longer be unilaterally set or easily controlled by the centre.

- Some of the new ways of connecting to people and helping them deal with the issues that affect their daily lives will demand **big changes in structure, process and culture** (attitudes and behaviour) in some aspects of the traditional public sector model. In a world where, in many situations, "the network knows more than we do", ideas will have to flow faster and more openly, information will have to be shared much more effectively and patterns of authority and control will have to shift.

> But the point is not simply to collect more data, more feedback or to search out more expert opinion… The point is not just to know more but to act better.

2: Current challenges for Australian governments

The Federal Government's *Ahead of the Game* blueprint for public sector reform provides some insights into some of the current challenges for government in Australia. The larger context is as complex and contested as perhaps it has ever been – an ageing and growing population, major challenges for environmental sustainability and resource management, especially water, tight fiscal conditions, major issues for our national security both in the region and globally and confronting the economic growth and strategic impact of especially China and India (pp8-10).

While these insights reflect the experience of government at the national level, many are also relevant to the experience of State Governments as well. The blueprint suggests that an effective public service:

- Meets the needs of citizens;

- Provides strong leadership and strategic direction;

- Contains a highly capable workforce; and

- Operates efficiently at a consistently high standard.

These components provide a framework through which to evaluate performance and set a benchmark for future reviews. It draws the conclusion that, in each of these areas, the Australian public service can improve, specifically by:

- Simplifying and integrating government's interactions with citizens, including decreasing the regulatory burden on business;

- Introducing greater openness, innovation and opportunities for collaboration in strategic policy development;

- Driving cultural change to support the uptake of emerging technologies for more effective services and engagement with citizens;

- Strengthening the support for and accountability of leaders;

- Clarifying the roles of employees and addressing current capability gaps across the service;

- Placing a stronger emphasis on the importance of professional development for all employees; and

- Improving efficiency and reducing internal red tape. P16

Relying on a KPMG survey of comparative performance between Australian and other government administrations around the world, the task force found that the public service "compared favourably with counterpart services elsewhere in a range of areas, but had worse performance than its best peers in the provision of online access to government information and services, mechanisms for cross-agency collaboration and tools and methods for incorporating external advice into the policy development and service design process."

It is instructive that the analysis was picked up by the Government 2.0 Task Force, whose advice to the Government suggested these were precisely areas of reform and performance improvement to which the tools, capabilities and culture of social networking could make a major contribution.

The *Ahead of the Game* blueprint notes that "the Australian people are also pushing for change." It goes on to suggest that "on the back of dramatic advancements in information technology over the past decade, there is an increasing expectation of high quality services and greater citizen involvement in service design."

It argues for "a stronger relationship with citizens through better delivery of services, and through greater involvement of citizens in their government." It advocates a public service capable of providing "strategic, big picture policy and delivery advice that addresses the most difficult policy challenges of the day." Secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet Terry Moran has noted that "the public service gives good advice on incremental policy improvement. Where we fall down is in long-term, transformational thinking; the big picture stuff."[11]

The blueprint goes on to argue for "greater openness, innovation and opportunities for collaboration in strategic policy development" which in turn should drive "cultural change to support the uptake of emerging technologies for more effective services and engagement with citizens."

Amplifying this theme, in 2009 the Government established a task force to suggest ways in which the tools and capabilities of Web 2.0 or the social web – what is often referred to as "Government 2.0" – could make a greater impact on the work, culture and effectiveness of the public sector.

---

[11] http://www.dpmc.gov.au/media/speech_2010_05_18.cfm

In its final report[12] the Task Force pointed out that "leadership, and policy and governance changes are needed to shift public sector culture and practice to make government information more accessible and usable, make government more consultative, participatory and transparent, build a culture of online innovation within Government, and to promote collaboration across agencies."

The Task Force presented a similarly mixed report card on the capacity of the Australian government to harness the new tools and capabilities of a more connected, open model of governing. It noted that "government 2.0 will not be easy for it directly challenges some aspects of established policy and practice within government." But in a key insight, the Task Force argued that, far from representing a threat to core values of good government and professional public service, "the changes to culture, practice and policy we envisage will ultimately advance the traditions of modern democratic government."

The report argued that by embracing government 2.0, Australia can aspire to:

- Make our democracy more participatory and informed

- Improve the quality and responsiveness of services in areas like education, health and environmental management, and at the same time deliver these services with greater agility and efficiency

- Cultivate and harness the enthusiasm of citizens, letting them more fully contribute to their wellbeing and that of their community

- Unlock the immense economic and social value of information and other content held by governments to serve as a precompetitive platform for innovation

…the search for solutions for better policy and improved public services demands a capacity for rapid learning and innovation, for large-scale collaboration and shared power and for new patterns of engagement with a more complicated and rapidly evolving mix of interests and people outside of government.

- Revitalise our public sector and make government policies and services more responsive to people's needs and concerns by:

- Provide government with the tools for a much greater level of community engagement

- Allow the users of government services much greater participation in their design and continual improvement

- Involve communities of interest and practice outside the public sector — which offer unique access to expertise, local knowledge and perspectives — in policy making and delivery

- Attract and retain bright, enthusiastic citizens to the public service by making their work less hierarchical, more collaborative and more intrinsically rewarding.

The Task Force also argued that these new tools and platforms are rapidly becoming vital tools to allow governments and public agencies to deliver on critical national objectives including the National Innovation Agenda and the aspiration for a more innovative public sector in a more connected democracy.

A third recent insight into current challenges facing government in Australia comes from the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) report on innovation in the public sector[13].

---

[12] *Engage: Getting on with Government 2.0*, December 2010

[13] *Empowering Change: Fostering Innovation in the Australian public Service,* Commonwealth of Australian, 2010

The report notes that in a comparison of results from 2006/7 to 2007/8, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of federal public sector employees who were satisfied with their opportunity to be creative and innovative at work, down from 70 per cent in 2006‑07 to 54 per cent in 2007‑08 p18

The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the opportunities for, and risks and obstacles involved in, a more urgent pursuit of the innovation agenda in the public sector. It claims that many employees emphasised that innovation in the public sector can be "a difficult and arduous process, taking a significant amount of personal commitment, time and energy." Many felt that they did not have the tools or other support that they needed to help them through the process of innovation and that they often lacked agency support in pursuing new ideas and approaches.

The report goes on to identify some of the barriers that public servants can face when they try to innovate, including "risk aversion, unsupportive processes, lack of access to new technologies, lack of an innovation focus in setting strategic directions, lack of feedback on ideas, a silo mentality, politicisation of issues, and a fear of failure". The MAC conclusion is clear – "while the frequency and impact of each barrier vary across agencies and programs, when viewed collectively they raise concerns about the disincentives public servants can face in trying to innovate."

3: How should governments respond?

If the challenges, risks and opportunities for modern government are becoming clearer, how should governments respond? We think there are four themes which should form the basis of any effective response by governments:

- The role of technology

- Innovation

- Services reform

- Collaboration.

We consider the key issues in each of these themes before offering some recommendations about action that could be taken to advance a reform agenda.

Technology

Government reform and public service performance improvement is impossible without an enthusiastic embrace of the new tools and networks of technology-enabled communications and collaboration which are enabling, and often accelerating, a more open and connected world.

In their private, social and professional lives, people are learning to exploit the opportunities, and manage the risks, of a world characterised by connectedness. Businesses, large and small, are pioneering new models of value creation, service and innovation afforded by these new tools.

Australia has a broadly positive record in the adoption of new technologies to improve the performance of government. It has been a global leader in the eGovernment project and has generated a strong track record of practical improvements to service delivery and internal organisational performance from the widespread use of information and communication technology.

The *Ahead of the Game* report picked out the role of technology in a range of different contexts, including the impact of the pace of technological change on the work of the public service (p11) and on the way citizens, taking advantage of new networks of knowledge, engage with government (p17).

As the eGovernment project has evolved into "government 2.0", new opportunities and challenges arise. In this phase, the technology dimension has embraced the tools and capabilities of the social web and social networking, what is often described as "Web 2.0".

In its report, the Australian Government's Task Force noted that, while Australia has some great examples of imaginative uses of social technologies to improve performance and citizen engagement, it had slipped behind other countries, especially the UK, New Zealand and the US, in pushing the new limits of technology innovation in government.

The habits and mindset which characterise many of these new tools and platforms are disrupting entrenched cultures of hierarchy and traditional patterns of bureaucratic control. In business, in media, in personal social interactions, big shifts are emerging in a world that is less deferential, more open and transparent and where reputation and position are increasingly earned and sustained as a function of contribution, not status.

Although the dividends for those willing to engage these changes are considerable and compelling, there are risks too. And while technology has never been the simple or singular answer to the challenges of public administration reform and renewal, it is increasingly true that it is not possible without it. And that means rethinking the role and potential of technology as it moves from the edge to the centre of the debate about government and governing in the 21st century.

In particular, we believe that the government has to address at least these priorities in its strategies to accelerate both the adoption and the impact of technology in the public sector:

- Continuing to push for the integration of the technology dimension, especially the opportunities and capabilities of government 2.0, into every aspect of service design and delivery, policy development and organisational performance.

- Creating stronger incentives for individual public servants, and for senior public service leaders, to explore more innovative ways in which technology can be harnessed to the big outcomes of service improvement, better policy making and rising levels of effective citizen engagement and participation

- Lifting the awareness and confidence of senior policy and program leaders in the public service about the role, potential and impact of technology to achieve the operational and strategic goals on which they are focused.

Innovation

Trust and competence remain the bedrock of effective government. These days, though, given the nature of the problems they are being asked to solve and the opportunities they are keen to exploit, governments have to embrace the instincts and practice of innovation. As it turns out, trust, competence and innovation are increasingly interdependent in a virtuous cycle that lifts performance and fuels legitimacy.

Governments have a continuing need to produce public value at scale and with integrity, making sure that everyone received a basic level of goods and services, without corruption and within a framework of law and democratic accountability.[14]

But in an open and "distributed" world – "everything 2.0" if you like - this approach feels less and less appropriate because:

- It is not good at dealing with change;

- It is not good at tackling complex problems;

- It delivers standard rather than personalized solutions;

- It treats the citizen as a stand-in-line recipient of public services;

---

[14] This section is adapted from recent research and consultations on collaboration and government 2.0 by the Internet Business Solutions Group Public Sector practice at Cisco Systems.

- It is based on an "expert/leader knows best" philosophy.

As the earlier discussion in this paper suggests, there are pressing new demands to which governments have to response, including the ability to:

- Predict and pre-empt change (anticipation);

- Deal with failure (resilience);

- More effectively generate and implement change;

- Distribute power, authority and accountability back out to the edge (in the form of frontline staff in public agencies and to communities and networks of service users and their families and carers).

Innovation at the edge is key. Societies that are more innovative, that are more socially cohesive and coherent, in which people adapt to change more effectively and in which a process of rapid learning has become institutionalised are likely to be characterised by more dispersed models of power and resources.

The search for answers to the 'wicked' problems all countries are facing demands growing stocks of social capital, invention and learning that characteristically thrive at the edge.

Paradoxically, what we've learned from the experience of other large organisations and institutions is that the more you want the edge to be the edge (that is, to innovate, to be agile and responsive, to learn fast, to be close to customers and citizens and communities) the more we need the centre to be the centre (provisioning and curating common platforms for shared services, pushing resources and assets out to the edge and creating enabling rules and regulations).

For the centre, this means that when it is called on to wield its legitimate power and authority, it will need to be done in a new accommodation with the edge which is where many of the attributes for success in a networked world are forged – innovation, resilience, empowerment, trust and autonomy.

In particular, the government should:

- Encourage and monitor the work of all public agencies in the development and execution of specific innovation strategies for services, policy and organisational performance.

> Increasingly, modern government has to adjust to a world in which power, authority and the capacity for impact is a function of the way people connect to share ideas, knowledge and commitment

- Pick up the proposals in the *Ahead of the Game* blueprint for new models of innovation incubation at a whole-of-service level. In particular, the proposal to establish an Australian version of Denmark's Mindlab, as an innovation space and resource to accelerate practical demands for fundamental re-design of services and policy, should be accelerated.

- Despite the current constrained budgetary environment, the government should protect a stream of funding for innovation, especially by the more imaginative use of technology to not just strip out costs and lift productivity, both of which remain important, but also to fuel the search for disruptive innovation and new ways of working and designing programs of public work.

Services

Governments design and deliver services. It is one of the primary ways in which its work impacts people and communities.

The rising ethic of co-design and co-production assumes new opportunities for consumers to be part of the process of creating the products and experiences they need and use. This creates a new imperative for the public sector to master the tools and rhythms of this more collaborative approach.

The *Ahead of the Game* advisory group noted that almost a third of the submissions it received, particularly those from service delivery agencies, community sector groups and individuals, discussed the need to "further improve service delivery and embed a citizen-centred approach to both policy and service delivery. These improvements need to go to integration of delivery which is more than just co-location itself" .p18

The advisory group reported that service delivery agencies know they need to work better for citizens. More than 70 per cent of agencies have a service charter to improve the quality of services they provide to the public.(p43)   But there is no APS -wide charter that unites the various arms of service delivery.

The Group suggested that existing service platforms and systems have evolved over decades and it will take time and resources to align them. It claimed the Australian Government does not have a whole of government strategy for service delivery. Agencies risk developing services in isolation which can adversely affect citizens' outcomes and government efficiency.

The need for better approaches to designing services and for integrating into those processes more effective ways to integrate the experience and expertise of service users and front-line staff is already a key challenge. The pressure for better performance in this domain is unlikely to diminish.

The Service Delivery Reform program (SDR) in the federal Department of Human Services is one significant example of this imperative. It is a flagship initiative within the context of a larger ambition to create what the *Ahead of the Game* report described as a whole of government service delivery strategy, especially making better use of technology (p34).

 It represents a major investment in creating a new model for human services which:

- Responds to the demand for value, efficiency and productivity

- Recognises the need therefore to embrace fully the habits and practice of co-creation and involving especially service users as fully as possible in the service design process

- Respects the role of services users, their carers and families as co-producers of many of the outcomes which many of the human services they access are trying to achieve – resilience, confidence and the ability to transcend setbacks and regain independence and equilibrium.

The SDR is at the heart of responding to the blueprint's claim that "better integrated services will help to ensure high service standards and value for money (and will need to) make the most of technological advances to meet increasing citizen expectations." (p19). It also reflects an ambition to streamline government's interactions with citizens and "engage with the community sector and citizens in policy development".

To complicate matters, many government services are delivered with and through non-government organisations in a devolved approach which has implications for effective engagement between citizens and government.

This creates two additional challenges in particular. One is the difficulty of ensuring opportunities for citizen and client participation of the same standard and impact across the more complex delivery value chain.

If the service is being developed and delivered by non-government organisations, how does the government ensure appropriate standards and quality of engagement across different stages of the process, over which they exercise often indirect or little operational control?

Another challenge is managing more complex information systems that ensure the capture, storage and access of key program and service delivery data on an "anywhere, anytime" basis across the different organisations involved.

As well, where clients are receiving support from multiple services and often from across multiple spheres of government, there are inevitably additional complexities in achieving a more citizen centric approach.

For example, for people trying to work their way through elderly care arrangements (for themselves or their relatives) there is an array of services from different levels of government. Where to enter and how to work through what often presents as a complicated maze of options can be confusing. Often, the individual services are designed within a programmatic and bureaucratic perspective rather than in a joined up or holistic way. In other words, they tend to reflect the organisational and institutional demands of the people delivering them, not the rhythms of the lives of those using them.

Addressing these systemic issues requires changes to back office policy and service systems as well as the innovative use of technology to draw together and present the services in a meaningful way to users and, at the same time, to simplify and integrate the business processes across different providers . While the Service Delivery Reform program in the Department of Human Services is a good example of an attempt to find practical solutions to many of these design issues, other human services agencies at the State level are also grappling with different dimensions of the integrated service design and delivery conundrum. These include the role of technology, social media and the mix of public, private and civil society organisations involved.

Collaboration

The final theme for reform is collaboration. In many ways, this is not so much a stand-alone theme as an idea and a set of practices that should become embedded in the work implicit in addressing the other themes.

The evidence from *Ahead of the Game* suggested that "collaboration within the APS is also limited." It reports that only 53 per cent of employees believe that other agencies are willing to collaborate to achieve whole of government outcomes. It said that barriers to collaboration mean that there is no consistent approach to strategic policy across departments, with little sharing of lessons learnt or best practice.(p21) The report also agrees that new approaches to consultation and collaboration are needed to engage more effectively with citizens (p39) within the context of "creating more open government" (p38).

In a timely new report from the Pew Research Centre's Internet and American Life project, the link was made explicitly between the quality of community information systems and how people feel about the quality of government and civic institutions. In a local government context, the report presents research that suggests that open and accessible public data has an impact on the way people think about their public agencies. "Those who think local government does well in sharing information," the report concludes "are also more likely to be satisfied with other parts of civic life such as the overall quality of their community and the performance of government and other institutions, as well as the ability of the entire information environment in their community to give them the information that matters."[15]

---

[15] http://www.pewinternet.org/~/media//Files/Reports/2011/Pew_Monitor_Communityinfo.pdf

The unavoidable reality remains, however, that on collaborative and whole of government approaches there has been much exhortation and stated support for some years and not always much compelling evidence of success. If, despite the rhetoric, the cultural reality from the top of governments and agencies is to remain focused on silo outcomes and results, reinforced by unchanged individual and organizational performance and accountability mechanisms, it's unlikely that the situation will change much.

These observations themselves reflect some important assumptions about the role of the public sector.

As well as delivering services in its own right, the public sector creates the policy and regulatory framework that makes markets work more effectively. It establishes the enabling environment for innovators and entrepreneurs in business and society to solve problems and create new value.

Whether it is responding to market failures, creating conditions for people and communities to flourish, creating effective policy and regulations or improving basic public services, governing well increasingly depends on the ability to create knowledge and insight from a much wider and more distributed mix of people and organisations than ever before. Good government is more and more a function of sensemaking for effective action. The challenge is how to wrangle meaning and useful insight from the exponential growth in range and mix of voices, demands and interests clamouring to be heard and competing for influence. Always at the centre of the task is the need to deliver services, or develop policy responses, which are not only efficient and effective but which also add to the stock if public value.

As a consequence, governments need to massively upgrade their capacity to connect, to communicate and to collaborate. Embracing the new instincts, cultures and capabilities of 'connectedness' is central to the ability of governments and the public sector to meet the new demands they confront. It is increasingly the human networks of knowledge, people and communities that will drive innovation for economic resilience, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

> The people and the expertise that can contribute to good policy and service design outcomes will be anywhere and everywhere. Often, they won't be in large institutions or traditional organisations, private, public or community.

The problem is that governments, and the public servants who support them, find themselves uncomfortably jammed between the imperatives of this emerging world and the often unhelpful culture and traditions of the old.

As the search for solutions for better policy and improved public services demands a capacity for large-scale collaboration and shared power and for new patterns of engagement with a more complicated mix of interests and people outside of government, the shortcomings of many existing public sector responses is becoming harder to ignore.

Beth Noveck, who was until recently was the Deputy CTO in the White House with responsibility for the Obama administration's open and transparent government agenda, advocates a process of "digital institution building" to make public governance processes both more expert and more democratic at the same time[16]:

> "Non-governmental participants have something more to offer than voting once a year—namely, good information. In much the same way that we devise legal procedures to ensure fairness in the courtroom or open deliberation in Congress, we can design technology—and the legal and policy framework to support it—that elicits specific, structured, and manageable input, not from individuals, but from collaborative groups".

---

[16] Beth Simone Noveck, Professor of Law at the New York Law School and a visiting Associate Professor in Communications at Stanford - http://www.democracyjournal.org/article.php?ID=6570

She continues "by being explicitly experimental with new forms of digital institution-building, we have an opportunity to increase the legitimacy of governmental decisions. The tools—increasingly cheap, sometimes free—will not replace the professionals." Technology will not, by itself, make complex regulatory problems any more tractable, or eliminate partisan disputes about values. What this next generation of civic software can do, she argues, "is introduce better information by enabling the expert public to contribute targeted information. In doing so, it can make possible practices of governance that are, at once, more expert and more democratic."

Before her departure from the White House role, Professor Noveck worked on an initiative, "ExpertNet", to crowdsource expertise across different dimensions of policy. It is an extension of the instinct for finding, and applying, the right mix of insight and expertise wherever it might be sourced. Appropriately enough, perhaps, this new venture is being developed using a wiki platform for widespread comment and contribution.[17]

The General Services Administration (GSA) and the White House Open Government Initiative are using the wiki to solicit feedback on ExpertNet, which they describe as "next generation citizen consultation" and "a government-wide software tool and process to elicit expert public participation". According to the wiki's introductory section, the initiative will:

1. Enable government officials to circulate notice of opportunities to participate in public consultations to members of the public with expertise on a topic.
2. Provide those volunteer experts with a mechanism to provide useful, relevant, and manageable feedback back to government officials.

This is a venture whose hallmarks are both participation and manageability, creating a platform where not only can the right mix of expertise and capability be found, but the input from the increasingly distributed network of experts can be managed within realistic limits.

Another angle on the challenge of supporting better innovation and collaboration is the development of new approaches to performance management and accountability.

How do approaches which allow local flexibility and a degree of citizen control or decision making power align with traditional accountability frameworks which arguably still focus on inputs and to some extent outputs rather than outcome and encourage a risk averse approach? Further, do frameworks of Ministerial accountability practically support collaborative, whole of government approaches?

It is all very well to call for better cross-agency and cross- jurisdictional approaches but if this is not actively led and championed by ministers and the processes they have to work with, it is likely progress will continue to be difficult. The Australian Public Service Commission's publication *Delivery Performance and Accountability* deals with some of these issues.[18]

Implicit in Noveck's call for more, different and better collaboration processes at the heart of good government is the apparent mismatch between the scale and complexity of some of the problems governments are trying to fix and the tools and methods available to do the work.

At a broader level, the exclusive franchise nature of most of the general government sector reinforces the often self-serving producer-focused rather than external client oriented culture. Previous reform programs, including the new public management model, tried to solve this by contracting or outsourcing public services to contestable suppliers of which the Job Network was the boldest (and perhaps only

---

[17] http://expertnet.wikispaces.com.

[18] http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications09/performanceandaccountability.htm

significant) achievement. This met strong resistance from unions and arguably received little public support (though it's unlikely that any party would return to the previous monopoly Employment National structure).

In the current context, the advent and rapid spread of social media is going to be powerful as another way of shifting the focus back to citizens and service users.

The impact of these new tools and their culture of open collaboration is embryonic. It's hard to discern solid new patterns or definitive evidence of the changes that are either possible or actually making a difference.

But occasionally anarchic as its practices and impact may sometimes appear, especially to more traditional public administration eyes, social media is likely to be both useful and effective in increasing pressure on agencies to better structure their surveying of client needs and satisfactions. This will become increasingly necessary if they are not to be hit by scatter gun attacks on their service deficiencies by irate clients and other stakeholders. This doesn't deny – in fact, it reinforces - the need for a more structured and systematic approach to inviting, processing and responding to citizen and customer input in a prompt and efficient manner.

There are many traditional tools for doing this, and some emerging new ones, which the public sector still has not extensively tried even though they are now common practice in virtually all large private enterprises.

Everyone on Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms, exchanges experiences and shares ideas and information. Sometimes trite, sometimes profound, these have become efficient ways for large, loosely connected groups of people to learn and to pick up ideas and trends.

These platforms, whose user profile is not only the young but also older population groups too, are showing considerable promise as a way to impact the decisions and actions of large corporations, for example. Service deficiencies, product faults and poor corporate citizenship are all areas where rapid swarms of angry or critical customers can press for action and change.

The public sector won't be spared. Just think of the recent upheavals in the Middle East as one obvious, if dramatic, example of the capacity for citizens to harness social media tools and platforms to give their ideas and demands real voice.

Less dramatically, in a range of policy and service contests, politicians and bureaucrats in Australia and in other countries are realising that issues can now get circulation without achieving mass media attention. Indeed the mass media is increasingly relying on the social media for news and photographs of stories as they break. Sitting between the traditional mass media and the social media is a new industry of aggregation and voice, including blogs, online newsletters, dedicated and searchableTwitter streams.

This multiplicity of sources for news, insight and commentary (the online *Business Spectator* is now four times bigger in circulation than the Australian Financial Review) and the fragmentation of news publishing (e.g. anyone can become their own journalist) poses huge challenges for government.

Politicians can no longer rely on just a few newspapers, radio and TV stations to communicate with the public or to track and influence debates and larger policy conversations. The field has become more complex, competitive and collaborative.

None of these insights deny the persistent questions that need to be asked as these new tools impact contemporary public administration practice. Questions of balance, equity, accountability and representativeness all have to be weighed carefully.

But what these developments demonstrate is that citizens are beginning to demand, and expect, government accountability at a more personal and often immediate level than traditional channels like annual reports can provide. It will become less and less effective for government agencies to assume that their annual report, occasional customer satisfaction surveys and a reasonably effective complaints handling system provide a sufficient window to, and with, the world.

As the search for solutions for better policy and improved public services demands a capacity for rapid learning and innovation, for large-scale collaboration and shared power and for new patterns of engagement with a more complicated and rapidly evolving mix of interests and people outside of government, the shortcomings of many existing public sector responses, at least in many situations, is becoming less and less easy to ignore.

4: Recommendations

The recommendations in this policy paper fall into the four theme categories under which we have discussed possible responses by government in the previous section:

- The role of technology

- Innovation

- Services reform

- Collaboration.

In each of these areas, there are things that governments can and should be doing not only to advance the general cause of reform and renewal but, in the process, to strengthen the contours of effective, modern government in a more open and connected world.

IPAA endorses the view in the *Ahead of the Game* report that Australia's public service needs to constantly improve, and become better at monitoring and motivating greater agility, capability and effectiveness. (p63).

Some guiding principles

As a foundation for the specific recommendations in each of the four areas, we have drawn from the paper some underlying principles that should guide the reform thinking and consequent investment in change of governments in Australia.

1. The "invitation to engage" should drive the search for more and better ways for government to listen to, and learn from, citizens, service users and public servants themselves in the design of new policy and services and in framing effective ways to address complex problems.

   Service users will be as much producers as they are consumers of public services and of the experiences from which public value emerges. If governments want to secure the benefits of trust, legitimacy and effectiveness that the new tools and capabilities of the collaborative web offer, they need to accept the logic of participation by, and engagement with, citizens in virtually all aspects of modern government.

2. The design of public services should integrate an aspiration for appropriate engagement and participation and should always deliver a "trust dividend" that strengthens the underlying confidence in the competence and accountability of the public sector.

3. In a new 'settlement' between centre and edge, the centre remains important but the edge is privileged in the search especially for innovation, social capital and participation.

4. The new public sector should redouble its commitment to enduring values of public work – a need for independence, rigorous analysis, judgment, speaking truth to power and the ability to nurture a sense of the wider public good.

5. An underlying shift to network-centric thinking assumes that authority often comes from the extended community connected across the network, accepts the assumption that "the network knows more than we do" and nurtures the rise of multiple leaders at different levels in the organisation.

Recommendations

The role of technology

1. The Government should embrace the recommendations and proposals from the Government 2.0 Task Force and ensure that the tools and platforms of Web 2.0 and social networking become an increasingly common part of the work style and workplaces of the public sector, lifting the quality of collaboration and accelerating the rate of learning for innovation.

2. Distinctive issues of clearance and authorization in government often make it harder for public agencies to adopt the more spontaneous and interactive rhythms of the social web. These should be systematically addressed and resolved to distinguish between those situations in which relatively open and direct conversation is appropriate, as opposed to those situations in which governments need to speak authoritatively.

Innovation

3. The Government should ensure that various techniques of crowdsourcing and collaboration are used to provide a prominent role for front line staff and services users as contributors to innovation in services and policy development.

4. The federal public sector should provide workplaces that are connected and properly provisioned with the tools and platforms to allow open, collaborative working, including work practices that allow for flexible work on an "anywhere, anytime" basis.

5. Picking up the recommendations of the Government 2.0 Task Force, the Government should accelerate the release of public sector information (PSI) as an indispensable catalyst to public innovation and creativity.

6. The Government should accelerate the development of a Mindlab initiative to create a shared space and a set of tools and skilled resources that can sustain a program of innovation in services, program design and organizational change[19].

Services reform

7. A distinct and growing practice of co-design in the development of new policies and better services should be nurtured, ensuring that agencies invest time and resources to trial co-design methods and share the results of their work with other public sector agencies and the wider community.

In many cases, the people receiving services can provide them as well, or at least in some measure be part of the service itself. Service design should look for opportunities to spread ideas already being tested by communities and individual innovators as well as creating more formal, traditional service structures.

---

[19] Mindlab is a venture of the Danish Government, established jointly by three Ministries to provide a space and a set of t ools and methodologies for services innovation. http://www.mind-lab.dk/en. In the *Ahead of the Game* report, there is a commitment to establishing a Mindlab-inspired initaitve to drive public services innovation in Australia.

Collaboration

8. Governments should establish tools and platforms for engagement and contribution that are easy, attractive and rewarding to use. They should enlist the widest possible contribution from those outside government as well as those already working in the public sector, who have skills and experience in this field, to help them create the new tools.

9. Governments should be investing in the accumulation of a body of reliable evidence with which to evaluate the use of these new social media and collaboration tools. In particular, the Government should assess the extent to which new collaboration methods improve the quality of decision-making and policy outcomes and deliver a "trust dividend" in terms of greater confidence by staff and citizens in the outcome of decisions.

10. A systematic investment should be made to evolve new models and methods of accountability in a more open and connected model of governing. This should include better ways to define accountability for public servants that combines traditional "upwards" accountability through Ministers to Parliament with new "downwards" and "outwards "accountability to service users and to communities.