

PUBLICSECTOR

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Journal of the Institute of Public Administration New Zealand

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EASTERN PROMISE: BUILDING A CHINA-CAPABLE PUBLIC SECTOR

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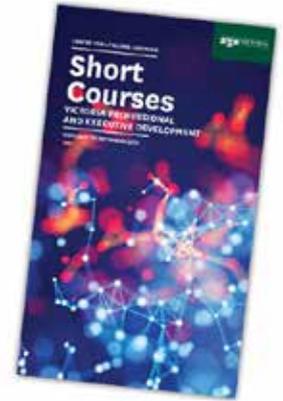
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Heather Haines
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PUBLISHER

**The Institute of Public Administration
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PO Box 5032, Wellington, New Zealand
Phone: +64 4 463 6940
Fax: +64 4 463 6939
Email: admin@ipanz.org.nz
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EDITOR

John O'Leary: johntoleary@hotmail.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Dave Armstrong
Shelly Biswell
Pete Coleman
Len Cook
Peter Dunne
Margaret McLachlan
Rose Northcott
John O'Leary
Paul Spoonley
Ross Tanner

JOURNAL ADVISORY GROUP

Luke Aki
Len Cook
Jo Cribb
John Larkindale
Karl Lofgren
Margaret McLachlan
Lewis Rowland
Ross Tanner

ADVERTISING

Phone: +64 4 463 6940
Fax: +64 4 463 6939
Email: comms@ipanz.org.nz

CONTRIBUTIONS

Public Sector welcomes contributions to each issue from readers.

Please contact the editor for more information.

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IPANZ welcomes both corporate and individual membership and journal subscriptions. Please email admin@ipanz.org.nz, phone +64 4 463 6940 or visit www.ipanz.org.nz to register online.

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Eastern Promise



"No Surprises"



Change for the Better



Counting Culture

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By IPANZ President Jo Cribb

We asked you – our members – what are the key issues facing the public sector and what should IPANZ focus on. More than 200 of you responded. You told us that the key issues facing the public service were financial pressure, the lack of ability to offer free and frank advice, the ongoing challenges of collaboration across agencies, ‘wicked’ problems, issues with career paths, remuneration and retention, and the competency of management.

You told us IPANZ should work on these issues. You also asked that we focus on strategies to develop the public service workforce, provide opportunities to share best practice, networking and for skill development, and that we should advocate to New Zealand about the value of the public service.

Your advice to us was the main input into the IPANZ board’s recent strategic planning day. The purpose of our strategy session was to revisit and refresh IPANZ’s mission and vision and identify our priorities for the next three years.

IPANZ’s vision is for a high-performing public service, respected and valued by all New Zealanders.

We will focus on three priority areas. We will seek to identify new ideas about the future of the public service. We will create opportunities for thought leadership. We will continue to work to uphold key public service values and principles. We recognise that while the values remain constant, the environment where they need to operate is changing rapidly. Upholding values such as free and frank advice and political neutrality in the 21st century government is an area we will focus on. We will promote the public service to New Zealanders. IPANZ has a role as an independent organisation to advocate for the value of the public service and its servants.

Over the next three years (2018 – 2021), as well as delivering training and networking opportunities, our work programme will consist of three work streams: the Public Servant of the Future – this work stream will

consider who will be working in the public service in the next decade and what they will be doing; Free and Frank Advice, Political Neutrality & Stewardship in 21st century Government – this work stream seeks to uphold these three principles and consider how they apply in the rapidly changing environment we work in; and Public Administration Reform – the Public Finance and State Sector Acts are 30 years old, so this work stream aims to look back and forward and consider the structure and functions of the state sector in the next 30 years.

To make an impact, IPANZ will continue to provide an independent and neutral space for robust debate. We will act as a catalyst and influencer of new ideas and we will become a credible voice for public comment.

We are excited about our direction, our clarity of vision and the impact we aim to make. We look forward to working with you.

**Jo Cribb
President**

2018 – The Year of Opportunities

A new government with new initiatives is set to make 2018 a very busy year for Policy Professionals. A number of exciting opportunities will present themselves in the new year so watch this space if you want to play a role in changing the future of New Zealand.

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Nominations open for Deloitte IPANZ Public Sector Excellence Awards 2018

The Institute of Public Administration New Zealand (IPANZ) is calling all public sector organisations to enter their most successful projects in the Deloitte IPANZ Public Sector Excellence Awards 2018. The nomination period is now open from 8 December and runs until 8 March 2018.

The awards recognise outstanding achievement and innovation by public sector organisations and teams across 10 categories.

“The most recent awards attracted a good number of entries and we again hope to see many nominations from agencies of all sizes and types,” says IPANZ General Manager Lewis Rowland.

The 10 award categories are:

- Building Trust and Confidence in Government
- Crown – Māori Relationships
- Improving Public Value through Business Transformation
- Digital Government
- Achieving Collective Impact
- Improving Performance through Leadership Excellence
- Public Sector Engagement
- Excellence in Regulatory Systems
- Improving Diversity and Inclusiveness within the Public Sector
- Young Professional of the Year

An overall Prime Minister’s Award for Public Sector Excellence is also awarded to one of the category winners (excluding the Young Professional award).

In 2017 it was won by Te Urewera - DOC Tūhoe Partnership, which the judges said was “An excellence initiative, demonstrating a transformation in the relationship. Most notably there were no direct examples to draw on anywhere in the world - that is true innovation.”



Working collaboratively, the Department of Conservation (DOC) and Tūhoe implemented ground-breaking new Treaty settlement legislation which granted Te Urewera legal personhood. The former national park, comprising over 2,000 square kilometres of native forest, has the same rights and powers as a citizen – a first for New Zealand. This has led to more Tūhoe employed in Te Urewera, more visitors to Te Urewera, and innovative DOC practices, including secondments with Te Uru Taumatua.

The Programme also won the Crown-Māori Excellence Award, by demonstrating how Crown and Māori can work together in the spirit of true partnership.

The awards, which have been running since 2008, are open to central and local government (including Council-controlled organisations), District Health Boards and tertiary institutions.

The award winners are profiled in *Public Sector* journal and several are invited to give presentations to IPANZ members. This year, four of the winning organisations took part in the post-awards series throughout October/November.

The Awards Ceremony will be held in July 2018 in Wellington.

For more information, criteria and to nominate, see www.ipanz.org.nz/excellenceawards



CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE

Public Sector journal is always happy to receive contributions from readers.

If you’re working on an interesting project in the public sector or have something relevant to say about a particular issue, think about sending us a short article on the subject. While we will always look at well written pieces on any public sector subject, it would help if your article touched on or related to one of the journal’s quarterly themes.

Themes for 2018 are:

- April:** The public servant of the future
- July:** Free & frank advice, political neutrality and stewardship
- September:** Public administration reform
- December:** Open issue

Contact the editor John O’Leary at johnholeary@hotmail.com

DIVERSITY

THE CHALLENGE OF A 'NEW' NEW ZEALAND



Prof. Paul Spoonley

The latest survey of employers and how they see/react to diversity (produced by Diversity Works and Massey University, October 2017) is interesting for as much as it does not say – as much as it does. Diversity is rather narrowly defined – gender, ageing and to a lesser extent ethnicity – and there are some apparent contradictions. For example, ageing is recognised as one of the top three issues facing organisations (both public and private) but relatively few have policies in place to address ageing, specifically the ageing of the workforce. For SMEs, ethnicity does not appear at all and it is only large firms that list it as an issue. There appears to have been some developments in terms of gender representation, although there are a minority but still significant number of firms that have very limited female representation at the governance or senior management levels. In this regard, the public sector does rather better than the private sector. And it is surprising to see how many firms do not collect data on diversity or do not evaluate initiatives.

This highlights the way in which diversity is narrowly defined or addressed. Diversity – which should include issues associated with gender, ethnicity, LGBTI, age and varying abilities – is a fundamental and important aspect of operating in contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand, especially for a public sector which needs to reflect the diversity of the society that it serves. Demographic drivers such as recent levels of immigration or the arrival in older age cohorts of the baby boomers, or the greater public and organisational awareness of the importance of diversity, should encourage public sector managers to prioritise such matters. It is, in my view, incumbent on public sector organisations to lead in this space as part of the contract with the communities they serve.

There are examples of good practice. As a judge in the annual Diversity Awards, I get to visit organisations and firms to assess their applications. Some are doing a great job. But many others could do better. The latter tend to be characterised by managers and leaders who do not see the point (“political correctness gone mad” as one said to me), by a reluctance to devote organisational resources to developing and delivering on diversity initiatives, or by a very poor awareness of how society has changed in New Zealand. As Michael Barnett noted in the foreword to the 2017 Diversity Awards publication, we need “courageous leaders to accelerate progress”. And I would urge those same leaders to read contributions such as David Livermore’s *Driven by Difference: How Great Companies Fuel Innovation Through Diversity*.

That said, there are also examples worth noting. In the 2016 Diversity Awards, the New Zealand Police won both their category and the supreme award. Under the leadership of Mike Bush and Wally Houmaha, a diversity

policy was adopted in late 2015 and changes made to policies, including recruitment and the emphasis put on diversity as an organisational driver. Treasury has a similar focus and is seeking to reduce unconscious bias organisationally. The New Zealand Army has recognised that it could do more, especially in relation to gender (the aim of increasing the number of military women) and increasing the numbers of Asians and Pasifika amongst its workforce.

Leadership

Leadership is critically important. If senior managers are not committed to addressing diversity, then the organisational culture will reflect this. Good data collection and monitoring is essential. In visiting organisations, the lack of data on the workforce or clients/stakeholder communities will quickly undermine the ability to achieve diversity recognition or inclusion goals. A third requirement is to develop an organisational rationale as to why diversity should be part of organisational culture; it is important to generate a sense of organisational belonging and inclusion, including for those who might feel marginalised by a focus on diversity. And do organisational policies and procedures reflect the importance and goals of diversity recognition? Is unconscious bias addressed in recruitment practices and promotion? Is the language of the workplace respectful and inclusive – and are non-English language communities catered for?

One common response in the survey on diversity mentioned above is that employers/managers “recruit and promote on the basis of merit”, as opposed to considering diversity explicitly. Merit arguments are often a default position that seeks to avoid engaging with diversity – does merit include considerations that relate to gender, age, ethnicity or varying abilities? In my experience, often not.

There are challenges. The ageing of the workforce has escalated in importance, given the size of the baby boomer generation. Female participation has changed the workforce composition of many workplaces – but this is not reflected in management. And immigration has changed the face of the “new” New Zealand considerably. We should continue to keep asking how well do our public services reflect these dynamics and changes.

Professor Paul Spoonley is the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University and a lead researcher on the Capturing the Diversity Dividend of Aotearoa/New Zealand research project (funded by MBIE, 2014-2020).

EASTERN PROMISE: Building a China-capable public sector

Events such as Chinese Language Week last October and the upcoming New Zealand-China Mayoral Forum in Wellington remind us of the ever-increasing importance of China to New Zealand. Stories of how businesses in the private sector are “cracking the Chinese market” are not uncommon – but what is the public sector doing to make itself China capable? Editor JOHN O’LEARY found out.

“China is different,” says John McArthur, Strategic Policy Advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. “It’s not just a matter of size, though that is important of course. It’s more that China is a place where the public sector still runs things – it’s a state-run economy and society.



John McArthur

“Given this, relationships with the public sector in China are very important, and the public sector in New Zealand has

to make itself capable of dealing with Chinese officials and bureaucrats as well as with Chinese business people.”

New Zealand has not been backward in fostering relations with China, says McArthur. “We recognised the People’s Republic in 1972, we were the first country to agree to China’s accession to the WTO in 1997, and we concluded a Free Trade Agreement with China in 2008. At ministerial and official level, we have built good relationships with the Chinese government. We’re a small country, with a good international reputation. The Chinese do not see us as threatening, and they like our style of “quiet diplomacy.”

“That said, it’s fair to say that our relations with China are still developing; they lack the all-roundness, the completeness that we see in our other international relationships – with Japan or the United States, for

instance. There’s still work to be done to foster deeper, more sophisticated relationships with China.”

One thing that needs to be done, says McArthur, is for the public sector in New Zealand to become more China-savvy. A major plank in this is the China Capable Public Sector (CCPS) programme, a cross-agency initiative led by MFAT which McArthur helped design. The programme, now in its third year, features a variety of China-focused forums and events designed to raise public sector awareness of China and help public sector leaders engage more effectively with China.

“CCPS works across multiple agencies and brings together groups of China experts from across the public sector to share knowledge,” says Terena Harris, the programme’s Human Capital Capability Architect and McArthur’s colleague at MFAT. “We have people participating from Ministry for Primary Industries, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, MBIE, Education New Zealand, New Zealand Police – to name but a few.

“There’s still work to be done to foster deeper, more sophisticated relationships with China.”

“The Knowledge Transfer events held in collaboration with the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre are a particular success. We’ve had fascinating talks on subjects such as



Free trade with China. 21 November 2004. Body, Guy Keverne, 1967-: [Digital cartoons published in New Zealand Herald]. Ref: DCDL-0013014. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



Terena Harris

“Global Green Shift: Renewable China”, “Can China Understand Us?” and “Navigating the Complexity of Business in China.” The talks are presented by global China experts, and are tailored to the public sector audience. Events are video-recorded so they’re available to anyone in the public sector who wants to improve their knowledge of China and how China works.”

“It’s about acquiring knowledge and developing a global mindset. The goal is to be “joined-up” in the way the public sector approaches China, so that we can help meet the aims of the NZ Inc China strategy, which is itself part of a broader strategy to increase the internationalisation of the New Zealand economy.”

McArthur, for his part, is careful to note that CCPS is not just about helping diplomats deal with Beijing. “It’s about helping the public sector as a whole become more China aware, not just offshore but onshore as well, in areas such as education, tourism and health. Increasing numbers of Chinese people live and work in New Zealand – our public sector needs to ensure it puts in place strategies to deal with it.”

CCPS has been a success, says McArthur. “It’s reached over 40 agencies across the public sector and seen over 2,000 people participating in its forums and events. The need and level of China awareness, of China capability, in the public sector is rising. Before too long, we hope, this capability will become embedded in public sector culture and the way we do things.”

Given the programme’s success, is it likely that similar capability initiatives for other countries might be rolled out in future?

“CCPS is scalable and transferable,” says McArthur. “We may develop an India Capable Public Sector programme in time, or maybe a Korea Capable Public Sector one. China is a good place to start.”

Workshops and boot camps

One person who is well aware of MFAT’s CCPS programme is Mike Arand, Business Development Manager, China at New Zealand Trade and Enterprise. “NZTE was involved in the design and build of CCPS, and I have spoken at a few of the programme’s masterclasses,” he says. “The learning and networking opportunities are great. In the normal course of events we’d expect to be talking to agencies such as MFAT and MPI, but thanks to CCPS we’ve been talking to people from across the public sector – from Customs, Immigration, Te Puni Kōkiri and so on.



Mike Arand

NZTE, says Arand, has been consciously increasing its own China capability. “We’ve grown our China team, bringing on board people with really good China experience. We’ve done internal activities like workshops, and we’ve sent people abroad, to China to attend China workshops and market visits. In particular, we put together the Accelerate China programme. This is designed to help New Zealand companies get to grips with the China market and it’s also seen us upskill our customer management team.

“In addition, NZTE is a member of the

SISTER ACT



Increasing the nation’s China capability is not the preserve of central government and NGOs; local government, too, has a role to play. Sister city relationships between New Zealand and Chinese cities are growing in importance and depth, and offer a valuable means of engaging with China at a subnational level.

“Sister city initiatives started back in the 1980s,” says Dave Cull, Mayor of Dunedin and President of Local Government New Zealand. “To begin with these relations were cultural in focus, but increasingly they have an economic element.”

As an example of what’s being done in this area, Cull points to his own city, Dunedin, which has been a sister city of Shanghai since 1994. “Basically, we play to our strengths as a city – what does Dunedin have that might interest people in Shanghai? We’re focusing on areas such as food and beverage, export education, tourism, healthy technology and biotech.

“Education is of special significance for us, and our tertiary institutions and many of our schools have relationships with counterparts in Shanghai.”

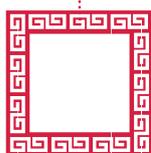
Real Impact

Cull was part of the delegation of mayors and business people who visited China in 2015 for the inaugural Zealand-China Mayoral Forum. “The forum was a success, allowing face-to-face contact with Chinese mayors, who have considerable status in their country.

“In December we’re having the second mayoral forum, here in New Zealand in Wellington. We hope to build on the links already established.”

New Zealand-China sister city relationships include Christchurch’s with Lanzhou and Wuhan, Wellington’s with Xiamen and Beijing, and Auckland’s with Guangzhou. And new partnership relationships are being established, encompassing provincial areas too, such as the one Wellington is developing with Zhejiang, a prosperous province south of Shanghai.

“These sister city relationships and regional partnerships are important,” says Cull. “They have real economic impact.”



Executive Board of the New Zealand China Council, which functions as a “bridge” between Government and companies building businesses in China. New Zealand China Council has commissioned research on China – for example, on the Belt and Road initiative and how New Zealand can benefit from it and NZTE supports where possible in such initiatives.”

“Anything we learn about doing business in China we put on our intranet, so others at NZTE can learn too and we provide a significant amount of information directly to the NZ companies, on the NZTE website, or through targeted workshops and seminars.”

NZTE, says Arand, aims to foster deeper, more sophisticated business relationships with China, echoing the point made by McArthur. “We’ve moved well away from the simple “how-do-you-do” approach - just putting a New



Stephen Jacobi

Zealand company in touch with a Chinese one and leaving it at that. Now, we’re analysing companies and markets more deeply, using our networks to bring the right producer and the right supplier together.

“For their part, I’d say that New Zealand companies these days are more sophisticated in their dealings with the Chinese – they’re less inclined to overestimate their China capability,

for one thing, which was sometimes a problem in the past.

“I’m sure that some of this increased China capability has come from what we at NZTE have been doing.”

More and more competition

Another person well aware of MFAT’s CCPS programme is Stephen Jacobi, head of the New Zealand China Council, a NGO tasked with building stronger, more resilient ties with China. “It’s a very commendable initiative,” he says, “but we need to be doing something like this in the business sector as well.

“The fact is, there’s more and more competition to attract Chinese attention, and we in New Zealand can’t assume we can just coast along, doing as we have done in the past. The French, for example, are pouring resources into their relationship with China, and this includes significant investment by their government. If we don’t consciously build our China capability, we in New Zealand are in danger of being left behind.”

“If we don’t consciously build our China capability, we in New Zealand are in danger of being left behind.”

The NZCC, says Jacobi, works with a range of government agencies and NGOs to build this capability. “We work with MFAT and NZTE of course, but also with organisations like the NZ China Trade Organisation, the NZ Contemporary China Research Centre, the Confucius Institute and the Asia New Zealand Foundation. Getting all these different organisations to work together can be challenging, but I am in no doubt that collaboration is the way forward.”

Two areas that Jacobi mentions as being of concern are language ability and cultural competence. “We need far more Mandarin speakers, both in the public sector and in business, if we are to widen and deepen our China relationships. The problem is that the schooling system here in New Zealand is not set up to encourage the learning of languages – there’s no real pathway for it in the curriculum. This is something that the Ministry of Education should look at.



Above: The Dunedin Chinese Garden

“The other area we as a nation need to do better in is general cultural competence. We need to increase our understanding of the Chinese economy and political system. This doesn’t mean we have to surrender or compromise on our own values, which can be rather different from those in China. But we do have to make more of an effort to understand China.”

The relationship with China, says Jacobi, has grown so fast that New Zealand is in many ways struggling to keep up. “As a nation, we have difficulty dealing with the subject of China, though debate here is less polarised than it is, say, in Australia. We see this in the kind of media coverage China gets, which is often simplistic and negative. We need to have a more nuanced, more sophisticated conversation about China.

“One thing NZCC is doing in this area is carrying out a survey of what New Zealanders really think of China, so we can get a better steer on the issue.”

A note of warning

The need to increase Asia capability in New Zealand’s public sector – and New Zealand generally – is a theme dear to the heart of Simon Draper, executive director of the Asia New Zealand Foundation.

“We run a number of programmes designed to increase knowledge of Asia, which of course includes China. While none are aimed specifically at the public sector, they are all open to the public sector employees. One of our programmes, Track II (or informal diplomacy), which features dialogues with Asian counterparts on strategic, regional and security issues, often includes people from MFAT, Ministry of Defence and so on.

“Another of our programmes, the Leadership Network, which provides professional development and leadership opportunities to young professionals working in the Asia area, has quite a few members from MBIE, Treasury and other government agencies.

“In addition, we support New Zealand journalists to travel to and learn more about Asia via our media programme.”



Simon Draper

Such programmes, says Draper, and the other China-focused initiatives being run by agencies such as MFAT and NZTE, successfully deepen understanding of the region but he sounds a note of warning.

“I’d say that we as New Zealanders tend to over-estimate their Asian capability. Recent survey results show that 66 percent of us still say we know little or nothing about Asia, while 67 percent of schoolchildren don’t think Asia skills will be relevant to their working life. Very few of our students study Asian languages, though the number learning Mandarin, it is true, is growing.

“This unawareness of/lack of interest in Asia extends to the public sector, which tends too often to be reactive and short-termist in its approach to Asian issues. People in every part of the public sector – not just in MFAT or NZTE – need to be thinking about Asia and what its economic, social and cultural rise means for New Zealand.

“And it’s not just about our external links to Asia – we need also to be looking at the growing presence of Asia within New Zealand. Tens of thousands of Asians (including many Chinese) now live here; some 23 percent of the Auckland population is of Asian origin. At the other end of the country, there’s a quickly growing Filipino community in Southland. What does their presence mean in terms of the region’s schools, health infrastructure, sport?

“I’d like to say that agencies across the public sector are thinking deeply and

widely about these questions. But I am afraid that if they are, it’s a very private conversation, which is not helpful in engaging wider New Zealand.

“New Zealand can’t just sleep-walk into the Asian century.”

A change of mindset

What New Zealand most needs, says Draper, is a change of mindset when it comes to Asia. “We need to leave behind the simple, transactional approach we have adopted in the past – the “how much milk powder can we sell to the Chinese?” approach – and focus on relationship-building at a deeper level.

“This means encouraging the learning of Asian languages such as Mandarin, encouraging the study of Asian cultures, and putting more effort into building up our links with Asian countries such as China, both at home and abroad.

“This may sound like “soft stuff”, but in fact it’s “hard stuff” that has to be done if we are to build our Asia capability. In all of this, the public sector has a significant role to play.”

New Zealand, says Draper, has been lucky, due to its geographical position in the Asia-Pacific region and the fact that it happens to produce goods and services that Asians increasingly want. But the country needs to start thinking much more widely and deeply about Asia – including China – if it is to derive maximum benefit and minimise potential risk from the epochal changes taking place there.

“New Zealand can’t just sleep-walk into the Asian century.”



KEEPING SAFE AND WELL: A NEW APPROACH

A new approach to health and safety led by Corrections has already seen increased leadership and co-operation across government agencies. Why does Corrections have this role and how does government collaboration mesh with departmental responsibility? MARGARET McLACHLAN found out.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 was a game changer. It shifted the focus from monitoring and recording health and safety incidents only to proactively identifying and managing risks. Everyone has a role to play, and in particular chief executives must make sure the business understands and is meeting its health and safety responsibilities. Employee engagement and representation now hold a much more central position as well.

“In health and safety, the accountability sits with senior leaders – chief executives and their most senior people. But the State Services Commission has seen the potential for collaboration and resourcing across the government sector. SSC mandated the Department of Corrections to undertake the new system role of Government Health and Safety Lead,” explains Vince Arbuckle, Deputy Chief Executive at Corrections, who is leading the initiative on behalf of the Chief Executive, Ray Smith.

This takes the model of other functional leads that already exist in areas such as procurement and ICT, but the approach here will be different in recognition of the legal accountabilities that sit with CEs.

Corrections was chosen as the lead agency as it has experience in managing a high level of risk in its operations and has demonstrated its commitment to health and safety. It won the ‘best board-level engagement’ in health and safety award at the NZ Workplace Health and Safety Awards 2017, an award recognising the leadership of Ray Smith and his senior team.

“The Government Health & Safety Lead was established in August 2017 as a collaborative, co-operative venture involving 31 core government departments, including the NZ Police. Four agencies – Housing New Zealand, New Zealand Defence Force, Accident Compensation Commission and Fire & Emergency NZ – are key players. Altogether, it encompasses 35 agencies and over 80,000 staff who have mostly similar governance structures, manage some extremely risky operations, frequently

have common clients and are mandated to deliver often complex services for all New Zealanders,” says Arbuckle.

“We’ve involved and taken advice from private sector companies on our Expert Advisory Panel, such as Air New Zealand, Fonterra, Z Energy and Auckland University of Technology. They bring a different and external perspective to the health and safety discussion. We’ve also worked with unions as key partners and sought their involvement and advice throughout.”

Andrew Crisp, Chief Executive of LINZ, welcomes the new cross-government approach.

“I think it’s really important that we, as government agency chief executives, share our learnings and challenges and think quite hard about how we drive forward health and safety across the government sector.

“We need to keep one another honest and encourage one another to keep the pedal down. Resources can be shared across the system; we’ve all done different things and it’s about how we get ourselves on the same page.



Andrew Crisp

“We want our staff to go home every day in the same state – or better – than they arrived in the morning. This is a good step-change to build on what others have done.”

Physical security

Despite only being underway for a few months, a work plan, strategy and resources have been agreed, says Arbuckle.

There are many strands to the work plan, including physical security across government service delivery areas. This is partly in response to the WINZ tragedy in Ashburton on 1 September 2014 in which two employees were killed.

“How can agencies make workplaces safe while delivering services to their, often vulnerable, clients?



Vince Arbuckle

“In 2016/17 the SSC led cross-system work to look at how to support agencies to address this question. It sought to provide practical guidance on priority aspects of physical security. Things like safe building design, relative to risk, and balancing the needs of staff, the public and service delivery, while being practical and affordable,” says Arbuckle.

The Physical Security Knowledge Bank went live on the PSR website in October. It provides shared access to good practice guides to improve physical security. The Government Health & Safety Lead will have future oversight of the Knowledge Bank, in conjunction with the NZSIS, adding to the available resources, including a guide for government staff on practical steps to stay safe.

“Each agency has to decide how to implement the guidance, based on its own risk profile. For example, here at Corrections’ head office, we have security gates that staff and visitors need a swipe card to enter. That’s proportionate to our risk but will not be necessary for many other agencies with lesser risk profiles.

Future plans

“It’s an exciting area of work but we need to be disciplined to deliver to the biggest demand. In 2018 we’ll deliver some benefits quickly in areas that matter most including mental health, lone-worker safety and appropriate sharing of client information,” says Arbuckle.

A practical way the Government Health & Safety Lead is supporting agencies is by establishing a Health and Safety Summer Intern Programme for 2017/18. Ten agencies will participate this year and have been matched with 10 students studying health and safety selected from over 70 applicants.

“There’s a shortage of qualified people in the health and safety area, so this will be something to help grow the workforce, and help generate ideas for the government,” Arbuckle says.

“We’ve also hosted 30 public service chief executives recently at a session where they reflected on their leadership of health and safety, learning from the experience of Steve Carden, Chief Executive of Landcorp.”

Health and safety also includes staff and client safety and wellbeing and health.

“We are working together to collaborate and develop shared resources. For example, many Government workers drive vehicles as part of their daily routine, so we could work with agencies to understand the common risks and controls, sharing resources and good practice wherever it makes sense.”

Another issue is the security of workers when working out of the office, such as when visiting people in their homes. Safety responses could include alarms, advice about where to park, how to recognise danger signs, and having a buddy system in place.

A topical concern is around stress and mental health. Chief executives are responsible for the mental health of their staff, including how it affects co-workers.

“Some agencies are doing very good work in this area; for example Police and the Police Association have recently released resources for front-line staff including an app for self-assessment of wellbeing and mental health.”

Strong support

The Government Health & Safety Lead approach is supported by the NZ Business Leaders’ Health & Safety Forum. Executive Director François Barton says the Forum has been a strong supporter and encourages this collaborative approach across the public sector.

“It’s a balanced, coherent programme of work, and it has commitment from the top. This gives me real confidence we can build the culture and in turn drive better performance. The government has taken a unique step with coherence, commitment and the opportunity to build competence,” Barton says.

He notes the potential for government to be a leader in some areas, for example managing psychosocial (mental health) risk. He’d like to see increased sharing between public and private sector CEs, for example on work-related health improvements where he thinks the government could play a transformational role.

“Health and Safety is complex and dynamic; where there’s work happening, there’s risk. How do we make sense of that complexity?”

“There’s no way that technical management of health and safety alone will deliver effective change. But bringing leadership to

that challenge provides the ability to lift the bar higher. The government has huge reach, extending to tens of thousands of workers and even more suppliers and contractors. Leadership is important if we want to lift the performance of the sector,” Barton says.



François Barton

Learning from one another

WorkSafe New Zealand is the government health and safety regulator. Alan Cooper, Chief Advisor, Better Regulation, says health and safety is more successful when an industry or sector collaborates and drives its own solutions.

“The value is that various agencies can learn from one another, particularly around the risks and risk assessments, and come up with appropriate responses,” Cooper says.



Alan Cooper

“The government sector will see a lot of benefits in collaborating, including developing capability in terms of assessing and managing risk. The risk profile will look different depending on each department, and you need to be careful not to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach, but there are advantages in collaborating where appropriate.”

He says that as New Zealand’s health and safety system matures, the opportunity to learn from one another across the public and private sectors is huge. One of the challenges when industries see themselves as unique is that it shuts down collaboration.

WorkSafe supports collaboration and the use of common tools. It welcomes the move by government agencies to adopt the SafePlus audit programme.

“Some audit programmes just focus on systems and documentation. SafePlus

dives deeper into performance and behaviour, which gives you an insight into whether you’ve adopted plans into actions,” Cooper says.

He says historically health and safety focused on high-frequency, low-impact injuries.

“But it’s wrong to focus on lost-time injury alone. We should be increasingly focused on the critical risks that arise from the work of our organisations and on controls to minimise the likelihood of people being killed or suffering life-changing illness or harm,” Cooper says.

Vince Arbuckle says the Government Health & Safety Lead programme will also develop guidance on governance, working with the Institute of Directors. Most of the government sector is in the relatively unique position of operating large, complex agencies without formal boards. Public service CEs must both manage their agencies and add a governance dimension. The guidance will include due diligence responsibilities and establishing innovative reporting practices, for example, encouraging the greater use of lead indicators such as health and safety prevention measures.

“If you look at previous accident data alone you’re looking at what has happened which *may* not be the best indicator of what may happen in the future. It’s also not an indicator of the rare but catastrophic event that could lead to serious injury or loss of life for a staff member, contractor or member of the public. Increasingly, safety is being seen as not just the absence of injury or harm but also the presence of controls that are designed to both reduce the incidence and consequences of potential adverse events.

“CEs must put aside the data from time to time and think deeply about their core business and what are the real risks that could happen and the mitigation measures in each agency. The government has to send a strong signal to New Zealand that everyone needs to lift their game, including the government sector.”

The new Health and Safety at Work Act has increased the awareness and senior leaders in an organisation need to be driving this throughout their organisation. New Zealand still has much to do as it still doesn’t compare well with some other countries.

Alan Cooper says of the government response, “It’s a significant initiative and a real opportunity for cross-government leadership and collaboration between government and private industries. WorkSafe is pleased to be actively supporting the programme from our Chief Executive level down.”

For more information contact:
govthealthandsafety@corrections.govt.nz

Born to serve

A conversation with Laulu Mac Leuanae



Laulu Mac Leuanae

Laulu Mac Leuanae brings a wealth of diverse experience and extensive networks to his new role as Chief Executive of the Ministry for Pacific Peoples. Five months into the job, he is loving the opportunity to improve the lives of Pacific people, but is also pragmatic about the significant challenges that poses. The 42-year-old public sector leader and Samoan chief talks with Public Sector's ROSE NORTHCOTT about his vision and a career that is all about serving New Zealand's Pacific community.

Where did you spend the early part of your life?

My parents were part of the Samoan migration in the late 60s and 70s during the manufacturing boom of New Zealand. We lived in Mangere in South Auckland initially and then, through perseverance and hard work, bought the family home out to the "great Massey" in West Auckland.

The experiences I saw my parents go through to navigate New Zealand's legal system back then compelled me to want to serve our Pacific communities as a lawyer. I obtained my law degree from Auckland University and had the privilege to practice law.

Like all things when you're young and passionate, I realised after 18 months that the legal fraternity was not where I really wanted to serve.

But what I also learned in those months was the surety that my career pathway was to advance Pacific peoples. The compelling desire to serve our Pacific communities became much more – it became a calling of my leadership to do more.

How did your career evolve after leaving law?

I moved into a role with the Pacific Business Trust that focused on business capacity building. I then worked for ProCare Health Ltd, one of the largest primary health care organisations in New Zealand serving the largest Pacific population. That's where I learned management and leadership skills and the influence a large organisation can have. I finished my MBA at this time.

From there I moved into a General Manager role at Pure Pacifica, a company that exports horticultural products from the South Pacific, primarily into Asian markets. It was a great experience and was a

stepping-stone for my next role as Chief Executive of the privately and publicly funded Pacific Cooperation Foundation. We worked throughout the wider Pacific region, promoting sustainable economic development initiatives.

Then this role at the Ministry for Pacific Peoples came up and it aligned with all my previous experiences and my values to serve our Pacific communities. I am loving the opportunity to serve and to establish a framework to ensure that our Pacific communities can thrive and excel.

You are also a Samoan chief. What does that mean?

There is a Samoan proverb, "O le ala ile pule o le tautua", which means the pathway to leadership is through service. Being made a chief (matai) comes out of service. It is not a birthright; however it is accessible only by blood and your service to your family and wider village community. It is an honour bestowed by your family who entrust you to represent them at the highest level of our village system.

What is the Ministry's focus?

We are the Government's principal advisor on policies and interventions that improve outcomes for Pacific peoples. We are here to ensure the success of our Pacific young people flowing through the pipeline from early childhood education to schooling, tertiary education and finally the workforce, entrepreneurship and their own families.

The Pacific population is the youngest, fastest-growing urban population in Aotearoa. Our medium age is 22.1 compared to 37 in the whole of NZ's population - we have a whole group of young people moving through the system fast and furiously.

Our vision is to have more successful Pacific peoples in Aotearoa. We have teams around the country so that we can easily connect with Pacific communities on the ground.

Our challenge is addressing the numerous barriers Pacific communities face and to make a difference in their advancement.

We look at the building blocks of any good society - healthy living, a good home, having access to quality education and increasing levels of income so people can live a quality lifestyle. Our role is to work with our colleagues across different government agencies and at different

levels to ensure that our Pacific communities have access to rights that everyone should have.

As a small agency, we cannot deliver on all those building blocks, but we can help our colleagues in different, and larger, government departments to see the issues from a Pacific cultural point of view. The success of Pacific communities requires an 'All of Government' approach.

What do you want to achieve?

I think that the main thing is that the Pacific person gets the same opportunities, and has the same living and education standards, as any New Zealander. We are a long way from that.

For example, one of the issues we are looking at is the ethnic pay gap across the public sector. European males earn the average highest salary, then European females, then Māori males, then Māori females, then Pacific males and then Pacific females who on average are the lowest paid public servants. That is not right.

My ultimate vision is that we have a Pacific society and community that is a high contributor to the New Zealand economy and that every Pacific person can excel and thrive. That is the reason I do what I do. I have the greatest opportunity in my office as Chief Executive to influence how the government allows this for our Pacific community.

What are your solutions?

There are three areas I have been preaching about in the Ministry and sharing with those who want to engage.

Firstly, "one voice". A collective and collaborative "voice". The public spend on Pacific people is around \$100 million annually. What has, perhaps accidentally, happened is that Pacific providers across education, health and social services appear not to be as connected as we should be – which goes right against the Pacific values of being collaborative, connected and collective. To make precious public money work for our Pacific people, we need to be integrated and speak with one voice; that is how we will influence all of government.

The second focus is on our identity - the culture, languages and heritage of Pacific peoples. It is one area where the Ministry leads and is expected to lead. For example, a few of our Pacific languages are dying and if we are not careful, some of our languages are projected to be gone within a couple of generations. This is our point of difference and we are looking at how we maintain those languages. Research shows that children do better when they speak more than one language.

The last piece is 'leap frog'. The easiest way to explain this is to consider how the Pacific region went straight from telephones to mobile technology - it did not have to go through the dial-up stage.

I am challenging our team to identify how we, as a Pacific community, can leap frog in other areas that put us into a leadership position. Part of that is looking at how we can get more Pacific youth to study technology, science and maths. We need to be ready to live and work in a world of automation and globalisation.

What are the entrenched challenges to overcome?

The average Pacific person lives in an overcrowded house, lives on a low income. They also have a lot of cultural responsibilities and obligations that impact on their income.

In the mindset of a Pacific person, the communal comes before the individual. Communal isn't just their family and extended family; it is also their responsibilities to the church and serving the wider community – their village.

Some people think, "I worked hard in my education and hard in my job and because I worked hard the opportunities came". But that is based on the assumption that Pacific people have the same opportunities all New Zealanders have and the same ability you have to take those opportunities. It is not the same for the community I serve and that is the biggest challenge we have.

It's a challenge that we as a New Zealand society need to get our heads around.

The real tension for us as Pacific peoples is that if your family needs money and you are of working age and you want to study law, or a STEM subject, but it takes you away from your cultural obligations within your family, what will you do?

Most of our youth will choose to hold their studies and take on a job because they think they should be doing something for their family. If you are looking at it through a Euro-centric lens, it doesn't make sense. But if you are looking at it through a Pacific lens, it makes perfect, good and sound sense.

That is the challenge and it is a difficult thing to work through.

I want to influence our government departments and my colleagues so that they understand that and know that it is not a level playing field.

How have you personally reconciled that tension?

As a New Zealander, I am as much a Kiwi as I am a Samoan. Once I got that paradigm settled in my mind and heart, it allowed me to thrive in the way I work because I can live in both worlds. I have the independence and ability to negotiate my cultural responsibilities.

The main thing for me is that the spirit of public service aligns so much with my upbringing and what I've been taught by my family about my role and how I serve through my work. I love this role of being a public servant. It comes with great responsibilities and obligations, and gives me the opportunity of doing what I cherish and honour most – more Pacific peoples being the best New Zealand citizens.



“NO SURPRISES” A PROBLEM PRINCIPLE?



Len Cook

What began as a justifiable convention has, arguably, morphed into something damaging, as recent events in relation to Winston Peters have shown. Here, veteran public servant LEN COOK ponders the “no surprises” principle and asks some necessary questions.

A principle is “a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behaviour or for a chain of reasoning”.

What public services do is full of surprises, and it always has been. The nature of those surprises varies with the function of the organisation. It is difficult to ignore the growth in expectations by the media of immediacy of response when things go awry or differ from promised outcomes. It is possible that the traditional invisibility of the mandarin meant that senior public servants were less prepared for any such increasing public scrutiny where it straddled the political/ professional boundary, whereas Ministers created a “political adviser” class, following the model set by Tony Blair’s Alistair Campbell. These advisors could ride roughshod over Ministers as much as officials, to manage-down a political risk, ensuring that an agreed “line to take” was never contradicted by conflicting facts. Political advisers need a constant flow of information, and “no surprises” is their food supply. The very looseness and uncertainty of “no surprises” widens the flow of information. It has also removed from connection with the media and the public those directly knowledgeable of the work. In New Zealand, a local police constable is among the few operations staff in the whole public service who addresses media enquires without a press officer as intermediary.

The electoral cycle means that Ministers and public servants often work to different time frames, and operate in different markets. “No surprises” makes public servants more cognisant of the pressures faced by Ministers, but their management of these pressures must meet principles central to our democracy, including the rule of law and an apolitical public service. It is not the constitutional role of public servants to support ministers with strategies that they should adopt to avoid potential political embarrassment, or to generate it for opponents. Public officials are responsible managers of risk and stewards of public trust and cannot be expeditious conduits of privileged information to fuel political discourse and positioning. Where “no surprises” has changed behaviours, we need to be able to judge whether those behaviours retain these principles. Public officials cannot be prescient about how the media, politicians or the public

will react to something, so that in a politically risk-averse environment, there may be insufficient incentives not to pass on information on anything that might in some circumstances come to a Minister’s attention in other ways. In the political market, every battle must be won regardless of the costs others bear, while for the public servant, the long-term integrity and trustworthiness of the system of which they are custodians will often involve the early acknowledgement of faults. ‘Burning the scrub to save the forest’ has little place in the political market where every day is one day closer to the next election. Political resolution of operational and professional tensions should be regarded as more likely to bring costs rather than benefits.

Failings

Wisely and sometimes erroneously, information has long been shared with Ministers by officials. One well publicised failing of the political/ professional boundary was the leaking to Prime Minister Muldoon in 1976 of the circumstances when a senior opposition member Colin Moyle had been spoken to by police. In 2009, Social Development Minister Paula Bennett disclosed details of the solo mothers’ benefits to media, after they criticised government policy. In response to a Human Rights Commission judgement that she breached the privacy of the two beneficiaries, the Minister later said that she was not ruling out revealing private details of beneficiaries in the future. Although such cases are infrequent, they linger long after the event, and they cause uncertainty about the authority of privacy legislation and other legislation and of public sector ethics. They open up the question of whether we need to rethink Parliamentary accountability rather than pretend that Ministers should know all, given the spread of activity for which governments are responsible.

Why did we acquire a need to now elevate all surprises to Ministerial attention? Has the quality and trustworthiness of government improved as a result? One possible view is that “no surprises” was a delayed reaction against the flexibility which managers obtained from the public sector changes of the late 1980s. These reforms provided a much-needed lift in the integrity of the public finance system and the management of public assets, made it possible to define more explicitly (and often limit) the role of the public service agencies, and required Ministers to be explicit about their expectations. The reforms were aimed at significantly changing the contest for scarce resources. The reforms also engineered more opportunity for innovation and flexibility in practice. However, after just one decade, this was increasingly followed by a heightened political aversion to any

Public officials are responsible managers of risk and stewards of public trust and cannot be expeditious conduits of privileged information to fuel political discourse and positioning.



risk-taking in operational matters, and that risk aversion snowballed. The introduction into the cabinet manual of the so-called “no surprises” principle encapsulated this unfortunate shift well.

The Cabinet manual states:

5.17 Careful planning, good faith, and a “no surprises” approach are key to making the arrangements work effectively. All Ministers and chief executives need to be familiar with the current arrangements and ensure that they have processes in place to implement them. Managing the consultation processes and other aspects of the relationships may take some time. Ministers and officials should factor the time required for consultation into their planning on each issue.

The SSC directive of 2014 notes:

“Representatives of a Crown entity appearing before select committees have an obligation to manage risks and avoid springing surprises on the Minister. This applies even when they appear on matters which do not involve ministerial accountability, such as when exercising an independent statutory responsibility or appearing in a personal capacity. Board members and employees who wish (or are invited) to make a submission to a select committee on a bill on behalf of their entity are expected to discuss the matter with their responsible Minister.”

Not all surprises need to be forewarned. Until 1986, the press releases of official statistics were provided under embargo to relevant Ministers in advance of their public release. Minister of Finance Muldoon was often observed to be impressively prescient about the CPI before its release, and all embargoed access was finally stopped by the Government Statistician after a blatant leak by the then Housing Minister of the housing component of the CPI after it had risen by over 20 percent during one quarter of 1986. Since that time, Ministers get no early access, and only on rare occasions when the Government Statistician judges that advance notice could be justified, when it happens people will be told in the associated news release. The statistician in 1986 had to respond to concerns of market integrity that Ministers had been ignoring, but could no longer do so in a deregulated economy. In the United Kingdom, where embargoed access of 48 hours occurred until recently, all those receiving early access were listed on the ONS website. More generally, giving Ministers advance notice of not only the existence but content of research findings increases the chance that they will wish to decide when they are released, if ever, or the form of release. There are always a few ministers who are impervious to the fact that when they play a part in any element of the release of scientifically produced work, the work itself will be less trusted by many. Not many departments now publish as many pieces of scientific work as they did a decade ago, despite evidence-based policy becoming well established as a public service mantra. These different experiences exemplify the limits

in relation to which officials whose actions are not underpinned by simple but strong statutory obligations will find themselves continually tested to protect the political professional boundary.

Some distinct tests for when Ministers need to be informed would probably take the following form:

- Would giving information to the Minister be consistent with any existing basis for the protection of the information, including the Privacy Act?
- Would availability or non-availability result in a loss of trust in government, either of laws, processes or roles?
- If the confidentiality or privacy of an individual were protected by statute, convention or public commitment, has the Minister accepted liability for meeting those obligations when placed on them as well, and any other person they consult about the information?
- If there is an unintended leak, can Ministers and their offices also be held to account by an appropriate investigating authority?
- If the information is intended for release in the public domain, will the release by the Minister change normal practice in the timing and process of release (e.g. research reports, embargoed information releases)?
- For the information that is passed over to the Minister to be then released by them, at a time and manner that they determine, would it build or reduce trust by the public and Her Majesty’s opposition in the organisation and the statutes that determine its practices?
- Would the immediacy of a response to the public be seriously affected by the referral process (e.g. local police responses to emerging events)?
- Is the agency ready to deal with the media in a manner which reflects its responsibility and accountability, as well as enabling the Minister to respond to Parliamentary scrutiny?

With a new Government in power, might a new set of Ministers that are fresh from the opposition benches be ideally placed to rethink the need for bringing some principles into a rule whose very looseness puts pressure on the constitutional boundary between Ministers and career public servants?

Len Cook was Government Statistician of the United Kingdom from 2000 to 2005. He worked at a senior level in the public service through the Lange years, the Bolger era, then in the UK civil service at the height of the Blair Brown government. He has had a privileged place in terms of release of information, observing the experiences of colleagues who lack the independence accorded the statistician.

CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

In the fourth and last of our special features on Commissions, writer SHELLY FARR BISWELL talks with the Health Quality & Safety Commission's Chief Executive Dr Janice Wilson and with Chief Advisor – Quality and Safety Gillian Bohm about the work of the Commission.

As the inaugural chief executive for the organisation, Dr Janice Wilson says “The aim of our work is to prevent harm and improve the quality of experience of health care for all New Zealanders.”



Janice Wilson

The Commission was established under the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Amendment Act 2010 to work with the health and disability sector to improve the quality of New Zealand's health care system.

Wilson says the health care sector wanted a national organisation to develop system-wide indicators and measures, as well as to support quality improvements.

“As a Crown entity, we are separate from policy functions, but we provide leadership and guidance. Our aim is to help health care professionals ‘do the right thing – and do it right’. We have four priorities in our intelligence work, which then informs our overall programmes. They are:

- equity in health care
- reducing unwarranted variation, so that good practice is the norm
- reducing harm
- partnering with consumers.

“Each of these are critical to a system-wide quality improvement approach.”

Quality improvement in action

Gillian Bohm, Chief Advisor – Quality and Safety, says that reducing falls in hospitals is a good example of the Commission's work.

“Hospital patients are often in a weak state and in an unfamiliar setting, which makes them particularly vulnerable to falling. In fact, falls are the most common cause of serious injury in our public hospitals.

“Using an adaptive approach to quality improvement approach, we've worked with the sector to develop and focus on a series of simple interventions to reduce falls in hospitals – with good results. Between 2010 and 2012 about two patients fell every week and broke their hips in New Zealand hospitals. Thanks to a concerted effort on the part of the sector, we've cut that number nearly in half.”

Bohm says the work on falls has been world leading.

“We're one of the first countries in the world to successfully tackle this issue,” she says. “International colleagues had told us ‘not to waste our time’ on reducing falls, as other programmes had failed to bring about measurable benefits. By working closely with the sector, however, we developed practical interventions that have led to good outcomes.”

“Between 2010 and 2012 about two patients fell every week and broke their hips in New Zealand hospitals. Thanks to a concerted effort on the part of the sector, we've cut that number nearly in half.”

Hospital falls are just one area where the Commission is investing its effort. Since 2012, the Commission has also led national safety

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Gillian Bohm

programmes on infection prevention and control, as well as safe surgery.

“For all our programmes we track change over time to see if significant, sustained changes have occurred. This type of monitoring means that we continue to look for ways to improve,” Bohm says.

“We have process measures in place to see improvements in addressing an issue, as well as outcome measures to measure the experience.”

Many of the results are impressive; for example, by standardising and promoting good practices for hip and knee surgery, post hip and knee surgery infections have been reduced by nearly one-third since August 2015.

Some issues, however, have proven to be more intractable. Hand hygiene practices have steadily improved in hospitals, for example, but that hasn't led to the expected reduction in Staphylococcus aureus infection rates.

“The hallmark of quality improvement is that you are always evaluating what you're doing and how it could be done better” says Janice Wilson. “While some issues will take more time to address, the commitment shown across the sector to changing and improving practice has been outstanding.”

Medication-related harm

One area of concern for the Commission is medication-related harm to patients. Harm is sometimes caused by errors in prescribing, dispensing or how patients take a medication, but at other times it may be an unexpected reaction to a medication. It's a pressing issue, as a recent study of six large district health boards (DHBs) suggests, where 28 percent of inpatients suffered some form of medication-related harm.

“It's a complicated issue that will require a range of interventions to address,” Wilson says. “One of those is improving communication between providers, individual patients and their families. Over the last 12 months we ran four focus groups in the Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Nelson Marlborough and Northland DHBs to discuss discharge planning for medication information. Now we're using the information provided by the focus groups to develop interventions to improve medication management and communication.”

For clinicians, the Commission, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, is leading the national Hospital eMedicines Management programme. With an emphasis on electronic prescriptions and pharmacy systems, the system makes it easier for healthcare providers to access

their patients' medication information. The programme is expected to support better medicines management. The system has been rolled out across adult wards in five DHBs (Southern, Taranaki, Canterbury, South Canterbury and Waitemata), with Auckland scheduled.

Communicating care

Gillian Bohm says “Transitions of care – such as from a person's GP to a specialist or hospital – is where we often see breakdowns in care and communication, which can exacerbate issues like medication-related harm.”

As the Commission's 2016 report *Learning from adverse events 2015–16* confirms, reported harms are often the “result of gaps in the system rather than specific poor practices (such as not washing hands)”.

“The hallmark of quality improvement is that you are always evaluating what you're doing and how it could be done better.”

According to the Commission's 2017 *Windows on the quality of healthcare in New Zealand*, “Common themes underpinning these stories include failures in communication and handover, including failure to involve the patient's family and whānau, as well as problems with access, equipment, IT systems and workloads.”

Bohm says “Our aim is to ensure the consumer – the patient – is at the heart of all of our work. Communication is a crucial part of that, for both the person receiving medical treatment and their families.”

One of the Commission's initiatives to support better communication has been developing and publishing *Who's Your Crew* to provide guidance on improving communication between hospital staff and the families of patients.

Janice Wilson says the Commission also emphasises co-design with consumers to address health care issues.

“Our Partners in Care co-design programme supports health care providers in engaging with consumers to improve quality, safety and experience of care,” she says. “It's a six-to-eight-month programme that aims to create better systems and processes that are more consumer-centred.”

This year, Taranaki and Hutt Valley DHBs undertook the Partners in Care programme, which included several patient-centred co-design projects. As one co-design team noted in their evaluation of their project, “The information and experiences captured from all involved in the process gave a diverse overview of the process and allowed us to ‘step outside of our box’ and see how interconnected we need to be with our partners, to work more efficiently and effectively.”

In a similar vein, for primary health care providers, the Commission has developed the quality improvement challenge Whakakotahi (to

A national response to a global concern

In New Zealand, like many other parts of the world, some of the medicines causing the greatest harm are opioids, particularly morphine and oxycodone. The Commission reported in its 2017 *Window on the quality of health care in New Zealand* that “Prescribing of opioids in New Zealand is on the rise. This is despite limited evidence of usefulness for non-cancer pain and increasing evidence of their role in adverse events and harms, including tolerance, addiction, overdose and death.”

Measuring issues like medication-related harm at the national level, however, can translate into quicker responses. As the Commission reported, “Oxycodone is a good example of success in making targeted efforts to improve safety and address inexplicable variation in dispensing behaviour. Dispensing rates of oxycodone in New Zealand increased by 249 percent between 2007 and 2011. Since then, inter-DHB cooperation and rising awareness of

harms have led to significant reductions in oxycodone dispensing rates, from 7.3 per 1000 people nationally in 2011 to 5.4 per 1000 in 2015 – 7800 fewer people.”





Patient Safety Week

Held in early November, the Commission and ACC partnered to deliver Patient Safety Week. This year the week was also supported by PHARMAC.

The theme for this year's week was "Let's talk medicine" to encourage better communication about medication between health professionals and consumers.

Resources developed by the Commission were available in English,

Māori, Samoan, Simplified Chinese and Hindi. The resources were created to help start a conversation between consumers and health care professionals about medication management.

Patient Safety Week is aligned with the World Health Organization's five-year initiative – Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety – to reduce severe, avoidable medication-associated harm in all countries by 50 percent.

be as one). Proposals from the sector need to support three strategic priority areas: equity, integration and consumer engagement.

The teams undertaking quality improvement work in 2017 through Whakakotahi include:

- Hutt Union & Community Health Services/Te Awakairangi Health Network – diabetes management
- Papakura Marae Health Clinic/National Hauora Coalition – gout management
- Nelson Marlborough DHB, Mapua Health, Tima Health, Harley Medical, and other primary care providers – post-coronary stent management following hospital discharge. The Commission works with the successful applicants on their quality improvement projects and facilitates group learning events. Twenty-two applications are now being considered for the 2018 challenge.

Mortality reviews

An important part of the work of the Commission is establishing mortality review committees to consider cases that resulted in preventable deaths, and to identify ways to avoid similar deaths in the future. Appointed by the Commission's Board, the committees are statutory bodies that are empowered to provide evidence-based advice to the government, the sector and the public. There are currently five active mortality review committees – child and youth, family violence, perinatal and maternal, perioperative, and suicide.

The work of the committees has helped bring about health care and societal changes that are saving lives. For example, the Child and Youth Mortality Review Committee's efforts, along with the work of the wider health care sector, contributed to a 24 percent reduction in the number of deaths of children and youth between 2002 and 2014. One of the main reasons for this decrease can be attributed to work to reduce sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI). The Child and Youth Mortality Review Committee recommended putting babies to sleep on their backs – a practice that has been instrumental in reducing SUDI. The review committee has also encouraged safe sleep spaces for babies.

Committees often need to look beyond what's happening within the health care sector to find solutions. For example, earlier this year the Perioperative Mortality Review Committee released a report on deaths related to surgery and anaesthesia that occur within 30 days of an operation. The committee's findings show people living in the most deprived areas had a higher rate of perioperative mortality (0.63 percent) than people living in the least deprived areas (0.39 percent).

As the report notes, "The poorest patients were also almost twice as likely as the other group to have emergency surgery, and had 14 percent more elective (waiting list) operations."

As the Committee's Chair Dr Leona Wilson said when the report was released, "Whenever we see a death after surgery it represents a tragic loss of life, but this disparity in mortality rates and number of emergency admissions is glaring and we need to look into why it exists, as every person in New Zealand has the right to expect the same standard of health care regardless of their socioeconomic situation."

An important part of each committee's work is to make evidence-based recommendations. For the Perioperative Mortality Review Committee, this has meant calling for research into socioeconomic and ethnic inequities in perioperative mortality, and emergency versus elective surgery rates. In addition, the committee has recommended that DHBs, with the support of the Ministry of Health, investigate programmes to improve access to primary care and medical and surgical specialists.

Building capability

While the commission's leadership in safety programmes is critical to the health and disability sector, in recent years the Commission has focused on supporting the sector to build its quality improvement capabilities.

Bohm says, "The sector requested a capability framework, which we delivered earlier this year, that identifies ways for health care practitioners to include quality improvement *in* the current system, as well as to find ways to work *on* a system for the future."

The health care sector is undergoing huge change right now, due to factors such as technology, an ageing population and growing social inequalities.

Bohm says, "For health care practitioners, the question becomes, 'How do you handle big change?' Our aim is to give context and examples to support practitioners to make these changes in a patient-centred way."

Janice Wilson adds, "The health care system is under stress right now. In many parts of the country, health care providers are seeing large increases in demand and staff are feeling busier and more stressed.

"One of our goals is to help staff see that incorporating quality improvement approaches may seem like 'just one more thing' or 'hard to do on top of everything else', but they actually can lead to better care and greater efficiencies."

UNQUIET TIMES



Ross Tanner

We live in unquiet times – so where does New Zealand fit in a troubled world? Here, former Deputy State Services Commissioner and former President of IPANZ Ross Tanner reviews Colin James’ recently published *Unquiet Time: Aotearoa/ New Zealand in a fast-changing world*.

Unquiet Time is Colin James’ eighth book (not including the books he has edited and chapters he has written for others’ compendiums). As an erstwhile reader of his regular media columns and commentaries, I approached this review with some enthusiasm, as James (for me at least) is one of the few journalists in New Zealand who regularly helicopters above the forest of daily and weekly political commentary, to survey the landscape and reflect on what has been happening outside the boundaries of our limited perspective from ground level. James has over several decades honed his skills at political and economic analysis, with the result that he is uniquely able amongst our present cluster of political commentators to analyse trends, discern shifts in our cultural values and attitudes, and point out defining issues facing our policy-makers and societal leaders, whether in government or business.

His argument is based on a view that there is a fundamental generational shift underway.

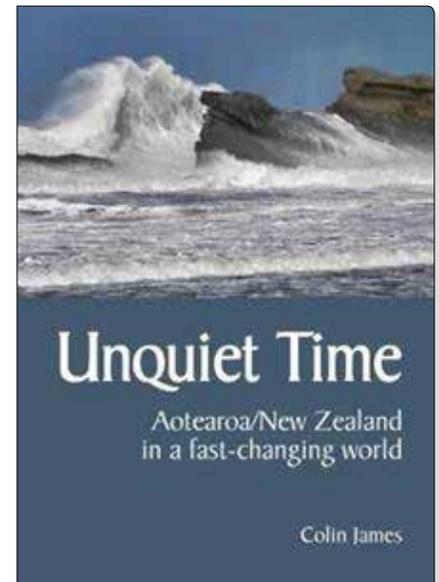
James notes ironically in this volume that an earlier book of his, written at

a time when there was a period of reflection underway after what had been a tumultuous decade of reform in the 1970s and 80s, was titled *The Quiet Revolution*, a description that was then challenged by his readers. This time, his argument is based on a view that there is a fundamental generational shift underway (which he has discussed regularly in his media columns as well) from the baby boomer (or as he terms them the ‘independence generation’) born between 1942 and 1962. The independence generation, he suggests, wrought changes in the 1970s and 1980s “that set New Zealand on a path out of a century and a half of colonial and post-colonial status towards a distinct Aotearoa/ New Zealand”. But there is now a global transition underway that is faster and at least as deep as anything that has happened to our nation since the arrival of Samuel Marsden in New Zealand—a point from which what was then Aotearoa changed beyond recognition into the early fabric and culture of the New Zealand we know today.

James sets the scene for what he argues is different thinking required to deal with and move on from the independence generation’s various legacies. He notes that this will be something that that generation cannot achieve, but rather the next generations (indicating that long-term shifts are at play).

Shaken

The first half of the book (titled ‘A World in Transit’) surveys the changes that are happening in the world around us. Rapid technological advances are driving step-changes in business and work, and as a result in societal order and interactions, at



speed. The 1942-62 cohort are ill-equipped to adapt to and manage these changes, but younger cohorts who have grown up with these changes are thinking and acting differently. Alongside the technology shock, there has been deep economic globalisation and economic rebalancing. As a consequence, there is geopolitical rebalancing and a globalisation of people though mass migration, including of refugees. The rules-based international order that developed after 1945 has been severely shaken. Political and economic certainties that drove the 1980s’ economic and related policy changes across liberal democracies are being tested, possibly to destruction James suggests, in a first-principles debate. There are also other issues to deal with that have global consequences—climate change and the limits to human exploitation of the natural environment and resources; cyber security

and cyber-organised terrorism. There is talk of a new paradigm, but no sense of what the new paradigm might be.

James explores each of these preliminary scene-setting themes in his initial chapters: 'disordered world-global issues'; 'refashioning globalisation'; 'a life-changing technology comes of age'; 'planetary issues in the Anthropocene'; 'trust, inequalities and some big questions'; 'shocks and disruptions- more to come'.

Adding to the challenge from these global developments, James argues that there is also a legacy from the changes made by the independence generation that have influenced the Aotearoa/ New Zealand that we know today, and not all for the greater good. An exposition of these changes follows in the second half of the book, titled 'Aotearoa/ New Zealand in the Independence Era'. Chapters describe and discuss the development of an independent foreign policy, the development of respect for and recognition of the Māori culture alongside the 'ex-British' one brought by the early settlers, exploitation of natural resources but at the same time the development of a path towards more responsible curation of resources; reorientation of the economy from public stewardship through the state in the interests of (nearly) all to one in which prices are determined by the markets, including international markets. The result, however, of this last change has been to widen wealth and economic disparities which have become embedded over time, making opportunity more dependent on the accident of birth.

Reading the above, one might be tempted to conclude that there is nothing that most of us didn't already know here about what is happening in the world around us, or the big issues facing New Zealand, and that James has not brought us any new insights. To the extent that he refers to issues that we already know about, that conclusion is true. But James pushes behind each of these developments and discusses their complexities, and in doing so points to a set of further questions and issues that will need to be addressed by the next generation of leaders in business and government. His analysis is underpinned by a wealth of research and references: the footnotes to each chapter will provide avid readers with many hours of potential exploration and follow up discussion.

Right now of course, we have a new coalition Government in place, one that has already stated its determination to address many of the big questions that James points to. One might therefore consider the timing and content of *Unquiet Time* as an excellent briefing for an incoming government. Not only, however, is it useful for politicians and public officials; business and non-government leaders might also wish to contribute to the discussion that needs to ensue.

Big cost

Perhaps most important of the issues to be resolved (in this writer's view) is that the flexibility and competitiveness introduced into the New Zealand economy in the 1980s and 1990s have come at a big cost: the loss of the guaranteed job and associated guaranteed sustenance. This legacy, James argues, has embedded serious socioeconomic inequalities that divide those who can be competitive in the globalised economy of which New Zealand is now inescapably a part from those who cannot compete. It has injected 'poverty' into the general discussion.

The products of the restless, freedom-oriented 'independence generation' have been independence, in foreign as well as domestic policy, a flexible economy, a (modest) degree of respect for the natural environment and a changed political system. But James concludes that that generation is reaching (perhaps, has reached?) the end of its tenure. What is it leaving behind and what might follow?

As well as the issue of inequality, and the diminution of perceived 'fairness' in Aotearoa New Zealand, the book suggests that there is a need for some learning for us to do to navigate successfully our disordered world as it heads into the 2020s. There is a risk of global disorder and conflict straining or even breaking the fictions and trust that bind the large societies into which many of the world's populations have formed in the last century or two. The age of digital

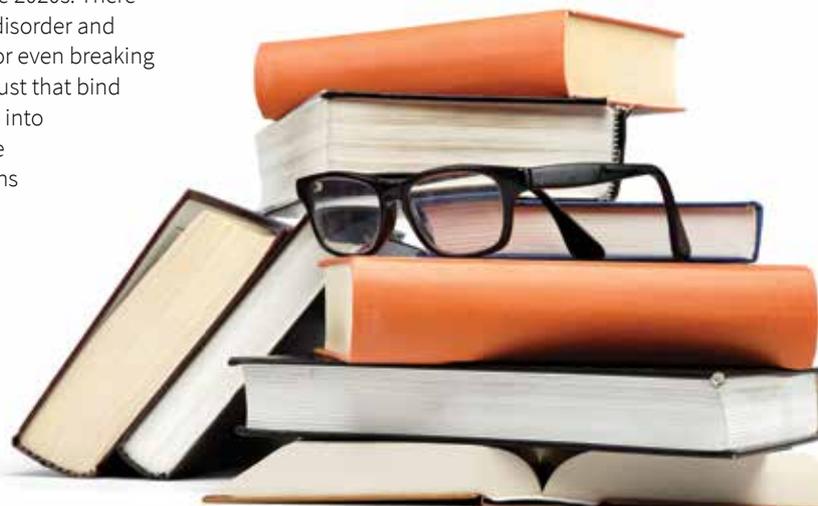
He asks whether we are flexible enough to absorb and adjust to the impact of change.

technology will strain the capitalist system that evolved out of the first industrial revolution. It has already severely truncated privacy. The spread and use of this technology will challenge the sovereignty of nation states with a new phase of globalisation because what goes on in cyberspace is not bounded by terrestrial borders.

A further issue is the looming impact of climate change and related factors including the disruptions of ecosystems and water, and food constraints (and the risk of pandemics).

James' final message is that "the next decade will likely be turbulent. It will likely be challenging and energising, painful and uplifting for those who live through the change. It will likely test Aotearoa/New Zealand's resilience..." He asks whether we are flexible enough to absorb and adjust to the impact of change. But it is also clear from this book, as well as from his other recently published columns, that he is confident that there is a new generation of leaders in our political system as well as in our public sector who are ready for this task, and who are themselves delving into the first principles re-examinations and debates that must surely be undertaken. It will be challenging and stimulating but also, hopefully, fun. In James' concluding words: "this is an unquiet time".

Colin James' Unquiet Time: Aotearoa/ New Zealand in a fast-changing world is available from Fraser Books.



BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS AND WISE OLD HANDS

*Politicians seem to be getting younger – does this create problems for older public servants?
Columnist and playwright DAVE ARMSTRONG ponders the issue of age at work.*

What is the ideal age for a person to head a department in the public service? I suspect most people would say 40s or 50s; some may even go as high as 60. How about 20 or 30? I don't think so.

Yet Mozart wrote 41 brilliant symphonies and several famous operas before his untimely death at only 35. Albert Einstein lived until 76, but discovered his famous equation when aged only 26. So many mathematicians have made brilliant discoveries in their 20s that by the time they hit their early 30s many feel 'past it'.

However, Beethoven wrote his great ninth symphony at the ripe old age of 54. Michelangelo, Monet, Matisse, and Picasso all produced masterpieces well into their 80s.

And though many great writers have done their best work in their 50s and 60s, they'd find it very difficult getting hired by Hollywood if they were older than 40. Younger 'digital natives' who grew up with computers now dominate the technology world, but I suspect there are more than a few wise old hands out there who contribute far more than you'd expect.

Do we live in an ageist society that is prejudiced against young and old at the same time?

The question of what age is the right one to fulfil a certain role has become almost a national obsession since the election of 37-year-old Jacinda Ardern, New Zealand's youngest prime minister in over 140 years. Her coalition partner,

deputy prime minister and foreign minister Winston Peters, is 72.

Discomfort

Much discomfort at the respective ages of our top two politicians has been expressed by some media commentators – particularly males between 40 and 55. The criticism was of the "she's too young and inexperienced and he's too old and set in his ways" type. But would we really be better off with, say, two 55-year-olds in their place?

Are we simply part of a global trend, with Canada recently electing a 43-year old prime minister, France a 39-year-old President, and Austrians giving the most votes to a party led by a 31-year-old?

Jacinda Ardern particularly relates to students and those of her generation struggling to buy a home. Meanwhile, Winston Peters, the originator of the Gold Card, is himself a superannuitant so understands well the issues facing the elderly. And with many New Zealanders living into their 90s, is 72 really that old?

Do we live in an ageist society that is prejudiced against young and old at the same time? It seems so. Political parties are constantly calling for 'regeneration' and getting rid of older 'dead wood' but that means competent MPs can lose their job simply because of their age.

Formidable former Green MP Catherine Delahunty gained respect from the education and disability sectors. Yet she retired as part of the Greens' 'regeneration'. Was it really time for her to go or did the Greens' leadership decide that, despite her considerable skill in select committees, she wouldn't look as good on the front cover of a magazine as the bright young things who replaced her?

In a period of few victories for the Labour Party, MP Sue Moroney almost managed to get paid parental leave extended through a private members bill, an incredible feat for an Opposition politician. Yet in 2017, 'regenerating' Labour offered the 53-year-old a low list placing, so she retired.

In early 2002 popular National MP Doug Kidd announced his retirement as part of National's 'regeneration'. Within a year, his party had selected a leader older than Kidd.

Like our government, the public service is constantly undergoing 'generational change' as older workers retire and are replaced by younger ones. Could more risks be taken in hiring younger people to top positions? I think so.

A musician friend told me of a major American orchestra that hired a brilliant 29-year-old woman as general manager. "That sort of thing would never happen here," he lamented.

Not that the corporate world is necessarily any better at initiating generational change. I once interviewed a young, highly successful entrepreneur who owned a multi-million dollar New Zealand technology company. In his first job in the corporate world, he performed well. After about a year his boss took him aside and told him that he had a great future. "Play your cards right and in about 10 years time you could have my job," said the boss. The young entrepreneur left to form his own company that afternoon.

Baby out with the bathwater?

Yet if we embrace generational change is it possible to throw out the baby with the bathwater? You bet. Even though in this digital age, many organisations copiously archive previous policies and processes, nothing beats having an experienced staff member on hand, with years of accumulated corporate knowledge. Sometimes younger, less experienced staff can find that a quick chat with an 'old hand' shows that not only has their particular problem been encountered before, but a ready solution is also at hand.

But with the way workforce dynamics are changing, the chance of an 'old hand' even being on staff is diminishing. The 'job for life' ethos is rapidly disappearing. Employees who can't keep up with technology are finding themselves on the outer. No matter how competent you



are, if you think a 'scrum' is a term only used in rugby, and that 'agile' is mainly used to describe gymnasts, then you may find your job prospects diminishing.

The perceived benefits of outsourcing are seeing many more contractors employed in both public and private sectors. I have been a contractor over many years for various organisations. Sometimes I find I have more corporate knowledge than the permanent staff of the institution contracting me. As the old saying goes, "the permanent staff come and go but the temporary contractors are here forever."

No matter how competent you are, if you think a 'scrum' is a term only used in rugby, and that 'agile' is mainly used to describe gymnasts, then you may find your job prospects diminishing.

However, if an enterprising public sector manager wants to promote a bright young staff member - and we all like to believe we live in a meritocracy - there are risks. How will other staff members react to a boss of a different age? Assumptions are sometimes made by older workers that younger staff have no 'life experience' and rely too much on 'new-fangled technology'.

Even though I have worked with many hard-working and intelligent millennials, I have lost count of the number of times I have heard baby boomers complain about twentysomethings 'lacking work ethic' and 'wanting everything done for them.'

Yet it can also work the other way. Younger staff can sometimes assume that an older boss will be out of touch, unable to operate technology and will have never heard of social media.

And though ignoring age might fit well with the aims of a meritocracy, younger workers being hired above older can cause disharmony. There are only so many senior positions, so as a workforce ages, large numbers of experienced staff eye top jobs. If they fail to gain promotion they may decide to leave or, worse, stick around and cause discontent.

Yet any system can ossify if it doesn't promote younger talent. Even though it's a very old-school idea, I love hearing stories of departmental heads or company CEOs who started off as cadets at the very lowest level and worked their way up.

What young person is going to join a company or department if they know that most senior positions go to high flyers from elsewhere - flashy overseas MBA in hand - who zoom in and often zoom out again soon after, having

created more problems than they've solved despite their massive salary.

Buzzword

Diversity has become, with some justification, a buzzword over the last few years. Though we have a long way to go in terms of gender diversity, most public and private employers agree that to have a gender balance is a good thing. The debate tends to be about how best to achieve it.

It's the same with ethnic diversity. Educators, police and many other government agencies have extolled the virtues of having an ethnically diverse workforce. The private sector has also advocated ethnic diversity. What better way to win that contract with an overseas company than having someone on your staff who can speak your potential client's language?

But we hear very little about age diversity. Even though it's easy to see the benefits of having a staff made up of a range of ages, age diversity doesn't seem to gain the same focus as gender and ethnic diversity.

I remember attending the Edinburgh Fringe Festival with my wife some years ago. On the last night, we invited a bunch of New Zealand artists around for a party in our inner-city digs. At about one in the morning, there was a polite knock at the door and a grey-haired policeman in his late 50s politely asked us to keep the noise down. The thing that struck both my wife and me was the age of the policeman. "You'd never come across a cop that age in New Zealand", we both exclaimed, most impressed. The music was turned down immediately.

The challenge that the public service - as well as many private organisations - now faces, is how it can encourage generational change without alienating clients and older staff. Can we promote young talent so that the public service is seen by our best and brightest as a true meritocracy and not an 'old boys' network where time-servers are rewarded, regardless of their ability?

Time to move on

At the same time, as our population ages, and not everyone retires the second they are eligible, it would be great if in every workplace people with experience were valued and seen as a vital resource rather than a demographic problem to be solved. How wonderful it would be if, on reaching retirement age, valued staff with illustrious careers did not immediately feel that it was time to move on and give someone else a go.

If the public service can encourage and demonstrate age diversity, then it is far more likely that the entire country will see it as a positive thing, and see it as just as important as gender and ethnic diversity.

COUNTING CULTURE



Management literature and leader development courses are increasingly exhorting leaders to attend to their organisation's culture, but provide few tools to help leaders manage culture. Harkness New Zealand Fellowship recipient PETER COLEMAN, a senior advisor in the New Zealand Defence Force recently returned from three months in the United States, has been looking at the question of quantifying organisational culture.

There is a great scene in the classic 1992 military legal drama *A Few Good Men* in which a platoon member, Corporal Barnes, discusses on the witness stand a 'code red' – an unofficial form of justice meted out by platoon members. Corporal Barnes is asked by the prosecutor to point to the chapter in the official Marine training manual that discusses code reds. A confused Barnes cannot, as code reds are what the platoon did but they weren't written in any official document.

Enter Lieutenant Dan Kaffee (Tom Cruise), who leaps to his feet asking Corporal Barnes to point in the same manuals to where they describe how to find the mess hall. Corporal Barnes laughs because that's not written in any manual either. Now it is Lieutenant Kaffee's turn to be confused, and he asks how Barnes ever got a meal while serving at the Marine barracks in Guantanamo Bay, if that wasn't in the manual?

Barnes simply replies: "I guess I just followed the crowd at chow time."

For anyone thinking about how culture works within their organisation, this scene is worth contemplating. In it we have members of a highly disciplined organisation – the U.S. Marines - acknowledging that administering a punishment is quite normal conduct, despite it having no official sanction, and running contrary to their espoused values.

The deep assumption held by platoon members appears to be that their military effectiveness is the single highest priority, in fact trumping everything else. And code reds work; they lift performance. This is the reason they justify to themselves this brutal regime, and why – just like how to find the mess hall - it is passed on informally through the organisation.

In short, the code red can exist because the Marines' cultural settings tell them it is important.

Such an explanation is entirely consistent with a handy definition of organisational culture given by one of the fathers of this field of study, Edgar Schein: "A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems."

This is essentially why organisations have become so interested in the topic of culture because, like it or not, it is understood that culture is driving behaviours within our organisations. Or as Ralph Kilmann so eloquently put it, because "organisational culture is a social energy that moves people to act."

PricewaterhouseCoopers research from 2013 found that 84 percent of leaders believed culture was critical to their organisation's success – with 60 percent of these same leaders saying culture was more important than their strategy or operating model.

Ernst & Young surveyed 100 board members of FTSE 350 companies in 2016, finding that 92 percent believed investment in culture had improved operating profits.

Less than one in three

However, that same year Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends report, having surveyed 7000 executives in 130 different countries, found that less than one in three executives (28 percent) reported understanding their organisation's culture.

This is where I found myself in mid-2016, contemplating the New Zealand Defence Force. If there is any organisation in New Zealand harnessing culture, it is the military: that is, taking young men and women, and shaping their understandings and beliefs to the point that they accept the direction of others to potentially put themselves into harm's way, and if necessary lay down their lives.

Yet the Defence Force does this automatically through its institutions. It knows what works, and so just keeps on doing that. That is, culture isn't so much a deliberate programme within the Defence Force, as a muscle memory.

But we know the future warrior, peacekeeper, military diplomat, intelligence analyst, logistics operator will likely need to operate in a different way in the future, so as to be effective in a more complex and rapidly changing world. So how might we need to change our culture?

Like in any organisation, public or private, such conversations about culture are the domain of executive leaders, as culture is critical to the success of the enterprise. But as management thinker Paul Drucker is often quoted as saying, "you can't manage what you can't measure".

My curiosity in quantifying culture had already been sparked by a 2008 paper by academics Stephen Gerras, Leonard Wong, and Charles Allen at the U.S. Army War College, titled "Organisational Culture: Applying a Hybrid Model to the U.S. Army". By borrowing from leading organisational culture theorists, they put forward a pragmatic hybrid model that assessed organisational culture within the U.S. Army.

I had been intrigued by the notion of how organisational leaders might be provided with useful metrics, linked to both sound theory

and practice, which might advance their understanding of their organisation's current cultural settings.

Transformational change has been a catch-cry within the public sector over the past decade. It seemed to me that change, and especially transformational change, cannot help but affect organisational culture, and that culture was a big reason why some change succeeds while others fail.

My Harkness Fellowship project was a direct response to these ideas. I wanted to identify, if possible, ways for leaders within organisations to be more deliberate in their approach to culture, as a catalyst to better delivering organisational change.

One management journal article I came across while preparing for my Fellowship, "Half a Century of Measuring Culture" (2009), identified at that time 121 different instruments for quantifying culture. So, unsurprisingly, what I found while in the United States was a huge number of instruments both in literature and in practical use.

The vast majority of these instruments seek to gauge culture through values, as collected via self-report questionnaires. Geert Hofstede has applied thinking on societal cultures to organisational cultures, identifying six independent cultural dimensions to assess. Cameron and Quinn's Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI), also identifies six dimensions but assesses each dimension twice, trying to identify the 'current state' as well as the 'desired state', which are then mapped against two polarities – internal versus external, and stability versus flexibility. Meanwhile, the work of Brian Hall and Benjamin Tonna has led to the creation of a baseline cultural diagnostic of some 125 values which has been mapped against eight 'stages of values development', built on the premise that successful organisations are founded upon quality relationships, both internally and externally.

The work of the U.S. Army War College relied upon the detailed methodology developed by Robert House and a team of researchers in their GLOBE international culture study, which focused on nine independent cultural dimensions. This one resonated for me personally, not least because the relatively short questionnaire (some 30-odd questions) had been completed in 62 societies around the world, including New Zealand, so presented the opportunity to consider organisational results against identifiable benchmarks.

Chuck emphasised to me that organisational cultures are not good or bad; they are not right or wrong; rather, they are either aligned or misaligned with the organisation's environment. Strikingly, this is the same question I believe senior leaders across the public sector are regularly asking themselves with regard to their strategy.

Many of these instruments, and more besides, will be familiar to people in public sector HR departments, especially Organisational Development specialists. That's not my background, and so I tried to make coming to this topic as a relative 'outsider' a virtue, not a vice. I was looking for tools that were pragmatic, comprehensible, and that had a theoretical base broadly accepted by the experts. As with the abovementioned, there seemed to be many diagnostic instruments that fitted that brief, though I have identified here the few that were repeatedly mentioned to me while on my Fellowship in the United States.

In conversation with some corporate organisations, I found they had chosen their diagnostic tool because they were recently post-merger,

and struggling to create a new, singular *esprit de corps*. So they were focused on homogenising beliefs and norms.

Many others, though, were simply motivated by the fear of peer competitors harnessing an innovation that would put them out of business, so were seeking greater agility, idea generation, and even risk-taking within their own organisations. They selected culture instruments that focused on these traits.

The U.S. Army was undertaking a culture project with the RAND Corporation while I was there, with the aim of understanding how cultures are developed within the Army, so that these might be used to foster their Total Army strategy.

Consequently, it's my conclusion that in all likelihood there isn't a single right or even best culture evaluation instrument. A few scores alone, representing a number of 'cultural dimensions', isn't going to provide a comprehensive description of your organisation's culture. Culture is just too complex, multi-dimensional, and multi-layered for that.

But I don't think that matters.

Senior leader conversations around 'risk' have been enhanced with the introduction of 'heat maps' – these synthesise the views of the Executive Team into a single common picture. Similarly, I would argue, having a culture instrument that provides a cultural snapshot is infinitely better than having no instrument at all.

A wet finger in the air

So long as we understand that what we put in front of senior organisational leaders is perhaps more akin to a wet finger in the air than the readings from a scientific gauge, it doesn't diminish the value of leaders deliberately discussing culture within the organisation.

Simply, a snapshot can be a catalyst for more effective strategic conversations: are leaders comfortable with the settings – are they aligned or misaligned with the organisation's goals and operating environment? What deep 'assumptions' held by the organisation might need to be shifted over time? And then, how might leaders go about shifting them?

While on my Harkness Fellowship, I was fortunate to be able to base myself out of the US Army War College. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the College, and especially to Colonel Charles 'Chuck' Allen (retired), who has spent many years considering and writing about how the U.S. Army can deliver change to be better ready for future conflict.

Chuck emphasised to me that organisational cultures are not good or bad; they are not right or wrong; rather, they are either aligned or misaligned with the organisation's environment. Strikingly, this is the same question I believe senior leaders across the public sector are regularly asking themselves with regard to their strategy.

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that organisational culture expert Edgar Schein noted in *Organisational Culture and Leadership* (1985) that "the unique and essential function of leadership is the manipulation of culture."

For public sector organisations, finding an appropriate culture instrument will, I believe, help leaders in this cause.

Measuring culture is a first step towards managing it.

It is with gratitude that I acknowledge the New Zealand Harkness Fellowship Trust and the support of the New Zealand Defence Force for making the Fellowship possible.

“NO SURPRISES” Risks and responsibilities



By Hon Peter Dunne

The issue of the public sector’s “no surprises” policy attracted considerable attention during the recent election campaign over revelations about national superannuation over-payments to a Member of Parliament.

Amidst all the mystery about what did and did not happen, the view generally emerged that this essentially administrative incident probably did not come within the usual ambit of the “no surprises” policy. While that consensus was established reasonably quickly, aided no doubt by the focus of an imminent election, the line between what is a legitimate case of “no surprises”, and what is not, remains subjective.

At its heart, the “no surprises” policy is about protecting Ministers from unpleasant surprises in their portfolios. It is an early warning system of developments that might occur that they should be aware of, or which might attract adverse comment. These are usually the types of situation a Minister would not normally have a direct line of sight on, but would be expected to comment upon, if they came into the public arena. Typically, they could be matters outside of government responsibility but with an ability to impinge upon government policy - likely developments within a sector group, or actions by organisations the Minister ought to have a

“heads-up” on - but they can also include cases where some sort of departmental administrative error or failing has occurred. The test is usually whether the issue is so significant that the Minister needs to know about it, or whether it is likely to attract media attention and require a Ministerial response. Clearly, a fair measure of judgement is applied to such calls, both, first in the department, and second within the Minister’s office as to whether the Minister ought to be informed. It goes without saying, of course, that implicit in this are the Minister’s own expectations and the extent to which he or she wants to be involved in the depths of the portfolio. These will vary from Minister to Minister, and departments and Ministerial staff learn quickly what their particular Minister’s expectations are. All of which makes the recent case that much more intriguing.

New focus

When the history of the recent National-led Government is acknowledged, attention should be paid to the changing role of the public sector in policy development that occurred as a result of the Government’s more strongly focused investment approach after 2014. That, and the development of the ten key result areas, has placed far more attention on collaboration between government departments and agencies to achieve agreed policy outcomes, as opposed to the hitherto more passive and traditional ‘silo’ approach. As a consequence, officials have come to play a much earlier, more active and strategic role in the development of new policy than has been the case previously. To that extent, they have a greater “investment” in the outcome of policy than traditionally was the case. This new focus has made agencies more accountable for policy outcomes, which has led to more innovative ways of thinking. For example, some of the work being contemplated

in the collection and use of personal data, where we are moving away from the current system of major agencies all individually collecting data to more shared portals, is requiring a much closer level of co-operation between major agencies than has been the case to date, which is making those agencies focus more sharply on the business they are doing. The relationship between senior officials and Ministers is becoming much closer as a result.

That in turn is likely to raise new issues and challenges for the “no surprises” policy. The existing early warning system will obviously continue, and officials will still pass on casual gossip to Ministers in the way they have always done, but there is likely to be a new edge to it, given the more strategic focus of policy development. That is not necessarily problematic, provided the policy is followed in pretty much the way it has been to date. The risk to be avoided, though, is of over-enthusiasm, especially in an environment where Ministers and officials are working more closely together.

The relationship between senior officials and Ministers is becoming much closer.

As a starting point, it is arguably timely, as a new Government takes office for there to be a discussion between the Prime Minister, senior Ministers and officials about expectations of how the policy is to be applied from here on, and for there to be public disclosure of the outcome. Even so, the application of the “no surprises” policy - which is an important aspect of administrative procedure to safeguard the public interest - will, because of its nature, remain subjective and reliant on public scrutiny. Further proof, perhaps, that in matters of public administration, the “front page of the morning paper” test remains the ultimate safeguard.



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