

## ICA COUNTRY REPORT

### Australia

#### Building Blocks to Advanced E-Government

##### 1. Identification of strategic and operational goals

Key Australian Government objectives include improving access and convenience for citizens (including business, individuals and groups) dealing with government, greater availability of information, a trusted on-line environment and greater efficiency and transparency of government processes. E-government is an important enabler in progressing and achieving these objectives.

The Government released its E-government Strategy, *Better Services, Better Government*, in November 2002. *Better Services, Better Government* articulates the policy framework within which Australian Government department and agency processes, policy and program development and service delivery will transform, enabled by the application of new technologies.

The development of whole-of-government approaches to information and communication technology (ICT) governance and investment is critical to this. Greater agency collaboration is required to transform the way B government operates. The sharing and re-use of resources, skills and information are key to developing both consistent approaches and seamless services.

Agency demands on ICT to support cross-government approaches continue to evolve and become better defined. New committees and reviews – ‘governance mechanisms’ - are being established to support this agenda. Similarly, state and local governments each have cross-agency approaches to enhancing efficiency through the better deployment of ICT.

##### 2. Organising for E-government

Increasingly, this move to more responsive, comprehensive and integrated government operations and service delivery requires a transformation of the business processes of governments. Seamless and consistent service across the Australian Government requires agencies to work together to ensure interoperability between their individual systems. The key issues in transformation will be the adoption and uptake of interoperable standards, the development of appropriate business models, the legal and policy frameworks that will facilitate integration, and governance arrangements that support both enterprise responsibilities and cross-agency approaches and responsibilities.

To promote collaborative approaches to these issues, the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) launched a new governance and investment framework for the Australian Government. The new framework was published in the October 2002 report *Australian Government Use of Information and Communications Technology: A New Governance and Investment Framework* (available from [www.imsc.gov.au](http://www.imsc.gov.au)).

The new framework is intended to facilitate a whole-of-government approach to ICT issues, where appropriate, while recognising that agencies will continue to manage their own ICT strategy, development, implementation and support.

The Information Management Strategy Committee (IMSC) is a key element of the framework, established to provide multi-agency leadership on information management strategies. The IMSC is central to achieving the level of cooperation and collaboration across federal agencies required to transform government processes.

The Chief Information Officer Committee (CIOC), which reports to the IMSC, is a 'thought leader' for agencies and identifies strategic ICT issues. Through its working groups, the CIOC is taking forward initiatives to address current and emerging issues, including strategic e-Government directions, security infrastructure, authentication, identity management, and sourcing. It also promotes research, development and knowledge sharing across the Australian Government.

The National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE) - an Executive Agency under the Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Portfolio - has responsibility for the development and coordination of advice to the Government on information economy issues. It provides leadership and a focal point within the federal public service on strategic issues driving e-government, providing a framework and coordinating whole of government approaches. With an emphasis on governance and stakeholder partnerships, the agency provides information, advice and key whole of government services; facilitates research and innovation; and promotes information sharing between agencies.

### **3. Funding**

Australian Government departments and agencies operate in a largely devolved resource management environment. They are accountable in law for making decisions about investment in ICT, but it has been recognised that more sophisticated service delivery may be difficult to progress without coherent cross-agency investment strategies.

The Management Advisory Committee (MAC) noted in the above report that investing up-front in innovative or higher-risk projects and funding cross-agency networks can be difficult under the existing budgetary system. In the current environment it is difficult to allocate funding for whole-of-government infrastructure projects.

The next round of business transformation is likely to involve the integration of multiple participants, and the benefits accruing to any individual agency may not necessarily be in direct proportion to the investment made by that agency. The MAC therefore proposed the IMSC agenda should include identifying significant issues related to investment in, and governance of, shared ICT infrastructure. Work is being progressed to develop shared investment models that can be implemented in the Budget process.

### **4. Changing laws, regulations and policies**

The progress of e-government initiatives to date, outside of the initial implementation of e-signatures, has mostly occurred within existing legislative and policy environments. Further integration is largely dependent on addressing privacy concerns. In the broader economy, government is addressing:

- broadband aggregation and access;
- spam reduction; and
- self-regulation of domain names.

To support agencies in their implementation of laws, regulations and policies (sometimes referred to as 'frameworks'), NOIE provides a range of information and opportunities, such as information, guides, case studies, seminars, checklists to promote best practice approaches. NOIE works closely with standards bodies and other relevant organisations to promote consistency and compatibility among relevant enablers of e-government, and to ensure that these frameworks are understood and appropriately implemented by departments and agencies.

## 5. Identifying and building additional critical infrastructure

In the May 2002 Budget the Attorney-General, the Minister for Defence and the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, announced funding for the e-security National Agenda to:

- address the need to protect critical infrastructure
- enhance intelligence and response capabilities of key Australian Government agencies
- raise awareness of e-security issues across the economy
- develop the e-security skills base
- encourage research and development in e-security.

NOIE, in close collaboration with a number of other Australian Government agencies, has worked effectively to help to establish cooperative arrangements with industry, academia and state and territory governments to enhance awareness of e-security issues. NOIE has also sought to enhance Australia's capacity to identify emerging threats, to ensure effective response mechanisms are in place and to reinforce emphasis upon e-security-related research and development. Underpinning this work has been a theme of developing a 'culture of security' across Australian Government agencies.

The Business-Government Task Force on Critical Infrastructure, established in March 2002, completed its report in May 2002. The Government accepted the Task Force's six key recommendations. A key element was the creation of a Trusted Information Sharing Network (TISN) to provide better mechanisms for sharing information with industry on threats and responses to those threats. In addition, a Critical Infrastructure Advisory Council (CIAC) was established, which will report to the Attorney-General.

## 6. Communicating and marketing to the public

The communications and marketing of e-government to the public is the responsibility of individual departments and agencies. The Government Communications Unit, within the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, <http://www.gcu.gov.au/code/about/index.html> provides advice and support to the government on communications issues.

NOIE facilitated a showcase of the on-line services of 33 Australian Government departments and agencies in an event called *E-government Week* in November 2002. Over 100 on-line services were displayed and demonstrated in Parliament House. The publication *Transforming Government: Achievements in e-government*, released in June 2003, featured case studies of a number of the initiatives showcased at *E-government Week*.

To further explore the issues associated with the marketing and communications of online services, NOIE has established the E-government Marketing Community of Practice. This will provide agency staff with the chance to explore and address some of the unique aspects

of marketing which e-government presents. In addition, it will provide members with the opportunity to learn from each other, share ideas and experience, and build knowledge regarding effective strategies for marketing e-government.

## **7. Improving national portals**

A major focus for improving online access at a whole of government level has been the Customer Focussed Portals Framework.

The objective of the Framework is to help all Australians access government information and services in an intuitive and easy way. The framework comprises a main entry point ([australia.gov.au](http://australia.gov.au)) through which a suite of portals developed around customer groupings and subject matter areas can be accessed.

These portals are designed from a customer-centric perspective and cover a diverse range of customer groupings and subject matters from business to families. As at July 2003 eighteen portals have been developed and are on-line. The remaining portal is under development and should be launched shortly.

The strategic future of online access will be addressed as part of the work being done by the Channel Management Working Group (*see also section 8*). An evaluation of the portals framework is currently being undertaken and is planned for completion in September 2003. The results of this evaluation will be an input into the development of the strategic direction.

## **8. Converging service delivery channels. Also called multi-channel service delivery**

Relevant channel and distribution strategies are seen as critical for future advancement in the provision of government services. Appropriate government wide strategies are important to achieving customer focussed, responsive, cost effective, accessible, trusted and secure service delivery. Important issues for consideration are the use of the online channel as an enabler for delivering multi-channel service improvement but at the same time preserving choice for customers and agencies.

As a result of work undertaken on Government Information Services for Businesses (Business Hotlines Review), a cross agency Channel Management Working Group was convened in May 2003 to focus on providing advice to support improvement in government service delivery. Work to date involves the examination of the range of existing services offered; different delivery platforms; customer and agency preference; and, channel capabilities.

This Group reports directly to the CIO Committee and is to provide a strategic directions paper by the end of 2003. This paper will examine options for future service delivery models.

## **9. Authentication procedures**

The Authentication Working Group (AWG) of the CIOC is developing a whole of commonwealth government e-authentication framework. In summary, the objectives for this framework are:

- consistent user experience across government online services;

- simple and lowest cost options for business and individuals to deal with government online securely;
- simple infrastructure processes and applications in government;
- consistent customer identification and identity management processes, linked to agreed transaction types, for use across government;
- ability of agencies to determine appropriate level of authentication for their business processes, based upon a business risk assessment; and
- resolution of privacy issues with reference to the Privacy Act 1988.

The above framework encompasses individuals as well as businesses and aims to accelerate the use of on-line e-government transactions by the public.

The Commonwealth Employee Identity Management Working Group (CEIMG) of the CIOC is addressing authenticating government employees. The key elements of Identity Management to be considered by this Working Group include:

- the instantiation of new identity;
- identifying and authenticating source documentation and identity claims;
- management of trusted identities and the granting of privileges and access;
- changing identity records when an individual changes role within the organisation, ensuring data consistency of identity records, and reversing the process when someone leaves;
- developing classes of trusted identity for inter-agency interoperability requirements and information sharing and the sharing of trusted identity across institutional boundaries assisting in fraud control; and
- ensuring privacy.

The Australian Government neither has nor plans to introduce a national identify card.

#### **10. Developing gateways which will process certain applications for all agencies and ministries (eg. authentication and bill payments)**

The approach developed for the Australian Government e-Authentication Framework may encompass shared services such as authentication portals or gateways. The Australian approach is to work from the bottom up rather than from the top down. The framework will initially concentrate on addressing what may be called the back end systems and procedures before the form of the front end is determined. It is not clear at this stage whether this will be a national authentication portal that aggregates services such as bill payment for the whole of government.

#### **11. Developing government wide architecture and standards**

The Australian government already has a substantial investment in its existing ICT infrastructure and business systems. This investment is a mix of systems and infrastructure built to industry standards and bespoke systems built by individual agencies.

The IMSC has identified the benefits of building all future systems to industry based standards to promote re-use and interoperability between systems. The IMSC has recently adopted an Interoperability Technical Framework as the basis for future investments.

The move to secure the government's business systems has given added impetus to the development of common ICT architectural standards.

This framework and the need to secure critical infrastructure will drive the development of a new interoperable architecture based on the business benefits of building to common standards. (*See also Section 14*)

## **12. Training senior managers and policy officials to think and act inter- governmentally**

A number of Australian Government committees are currently reviewing culture and capability in the public sector, with a view to determining how to better support whole of government opportunities. Issues being addressed include:

- how to create and nurture a facilitative culture;
- what structures would encourage collaboration including reward and recognition incentives; and
- how performance can be tied to collaborative and whole-of-government contributions.

The Australian Public Sector Commission (APSC) has carriage for coordinating and supporting APS-wide training and career development, including the fostering of leadership. It has indicated it is interested in working with the Chief Information Officer Committee (CIOC) and NOIE on more coordinated approaches to ICT skills.

## **13. Organising and managing information for sharing across the government**

Responsibility for organising and managing information primarily rests with agencies within the Australian Government. However, the IMSC, NOIE and agencies recognise that the optimal use of ICT comes from sharing knowledge, information and data. The IMSC will explore the need for further frameworks, policies and infrastructure to support whole of government sharing of information when revising the e-government strategy.

The Interoperability Technical Framework (*see Section 11*) has recently been endorsed by the IMSC. The framework specifies agreed technical standards that will enable government ICT systems within the Australian Government and State and Territory governments to communicate and exchange information.

A head agreement protocol between Australian Government agencies and state jurisdictions is in development. This aims to make it easier for agencies to integrate services across jurisdictions because a large number of business issues (eg. pricing models, security, privacy, governance etc) can be agreed once then applied many times. This approach will reduce the cycle time and cost in negotiating agreements to improve service delivery outcomes to citizens or to reduce the cost of government.

The Australian Government recognises that a secure online environment underpins the capacity for trusted communications between government agencies. IMSC is overseeing the development of appropriate cross-agency policy and frameworks in the areas of authentication, identity management of government employees and secure infrastructure. A draft e-authentication framework will shortly be considered for approval by the IMSC, and the Attorney General's Department initiative to look at identify fraud will entail establishment of cross agency working groups (*see also Section 9*).

The Attorney General's On-line Verification of Identity Documentation Working Group aims to establish the policy, infrastructure and applications necessary for participating federal agencies to cross check identity documents, such as birth, marriage and death

certificates, that are currently held in State and Territory government repositories. (*see also Section 14*)

**14. Developing Government Without Boundaries (GWoB) systems that cross program, office, department, and agency/ministry lines. XML and Open Source Software (OSS) initiatives can be reported in this building block**

Australia has adopted a federated model that supports jurisdictional independence and recognises the need for collaboration between and across jurisdictions. Cross-jurisdictional initiatives must establish a clear business case, sound governance and financial models to justify shared initiatives.

NOIE has been working within and across jurisdictions to explore the issues involved around governments collaborating to deliver services to citizens. The key focus of this work is around understanding the layers of interoperability associated with collaboration. Interoperability in this context relates to both technical and non-technical aspects of government business collaboration and extends to include private sector partnering arrangements in government service delivery.

Specific initiatives include:

***Interoperability Frameworks***

The release of an Australian Government Technical Interoperability Framework that describes the technical standards to be employed by Australian Government agencies in sharing information (*see also Section 11*). Consideration is being given carry this work forward to develop a National Technical Interoperability Framework under the auspices of Standards Australia and the Integrated Transactions Reference Group<sup>1</sup> (ITRG). Agencies' responses to the framework have been positive with many seeing it as a common space from which further agreements on standards can be leveraged. Agencies are now seeking NOIE's facilitation of standards around data definition, messaging and domain specific standards such as Taxation.

The implementation of a pilot XML Clearing House containing XML schema from agencies across 4 state jurisdictions and 4 Australian Government agencies. The goal of this project was to establish whether there is any benefit in agencies within and across jurisdiction sharing schema related to their business. The expected benefits of this exercise are twofold:

1. Reduce the cost of developing schema by allowing sharing of schema already developed; and
2. Move towards standardisation by providing a space where schema can be compared and selected thus reducing variability over time.

This pilot is providing valuable information about how collaborative infrastructure can be governed, although funding models are yet to be established.

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<sup>1</sup> The ITRG is a cross jurisdictional working group sponsored by On Line Council Officials

reduce the cycle time and cost in negotiating agreements to improve service delivery outcomes to citizens or to reduce the cost of government.

### ***Cross Jurisdictional Collaborative Agreements***

A pilot project is currently underway involving Centrelink, the West Australian Government and West Australian Local Governments. The process is being facilitated by NOIE in accordance with a set of draft principles agreed to by the ITRG Centrelink is willing to offer a customer confirmation service to state agencies who can then use this information to offer concessions to eligible citizens. For example, a person who has an old age pension may be eligible for a housing rebate.

With the customer confirmation facility in place it will be possible for the state agency to make this assessment on the spot rather than wait weeks for paper work to flow between the respective organisations. Clearly this initiative also offers savings to both Centrelink and the state agency through reduced handling costs etc.

## **15. Measuring results**

In 2002, NOIE contracted DMR Consulting to undertake a review of the demand for and benefits of e-government. The aim of the study was to assess the demand for and benefits of E-government services and to provide a calculation of the Return on Investment and gain some understanding about the value that e-government programs deliver. The study also evaluated seven programs in detail to form Case Study data.

The study found that demand for e-government services was quite high. Forty six percent of people and over fifty seven percent of businesses now make use of e-government services and demand is expected to increase by 30% over the next 12 months. For Internet users, e-government is the preferred form of access to government services, with penetration across existing Internet users close to 80 percent.

Popular services for the public to date have been the *e-tax* online taxation lodgement system ([www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au)) allows individual taxpayers to file taxes over the Internet. Another popular service is the primary gateway to Australian Federal government information and services ([www.australia.gov.au](http://www.australia.gov.au)). Other popular services include **Jobsearch** ([www.jobsearch.gov.au](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au)) a comprehensive online job board, **eVisa** enabling application and payment for the most common Australian visas via the Internet. For businesses a popular online service is the Business Entry Point ([www.bep.gov.au](http://www.bep.gov.au)) which assists businesses to comply with government requirements by providing free online access to necessary information and services.

The study indicated that future demand for e-government services was likely to occur in the areas of Health, Taxation and Community Support. Overall, it was found that e-government reduced the complexity of government from the user's perspective, made government more transparent, and generated a wider economic benefit.

A phase of the study included the development of a methodology to assess demand and value. As a result the study provided a demand and value measurement framework for agencies in the form of a toolkit with guidelines, templates and workbooks. A number of agencies are currently piloting the tools with the intention of collaboratively improving the process. Agencies are encouraged to measure, monitor and evaluate their e-government programs as an ongoing priority.

[http://www.noie.gov.au/projects/egovernment/Better\\_Government/egovt\\_benefits\\_study.htm](http://www.noie.gov.au/projects/egovernment/Better_Government/egovt_benefits_study.htm)

**16. Obtaining feedback from the public**

At this stage, feedback is sought at the agency or portfolio level and tends to be program based. Where programs fall across agencies or enterprises, a lead agency approach is taken, with extensive survey work undertaken by lead agencies and fed back to committees.

**17. E-governance including E-voting and obtaining comments on proposed laws and regulations**

In Australia, e-governance and e-voting are regarded as two separate issues. E-governance refers to the management of processes that underpin government policy and program development and service delivery. The Australian approach to federal e-governance can be found in the response to Question 2: Organising for Integration.

Australia is one of the few countries that have compulsory voting. We also have separate jurisdictional systems, electoral rolls and voting processes. The Australian Electoral Commission released in March 2001 a report on electronic voting and electronic counting of votes. This concluded that Australian electoral authorities should not at this stage embark on a program to fully replace the easily understood, publicly and politically accepted efficient, transparent paper ballot system that currently exists.

*Better Services, Better Government* articulated that a strengthening of the relationship between government and citizens through online consultation and feedback, as a means to improved government decision-making, was a key objective. Initiatives tend to occur at the individual agency level, with the electronic channel increasingly used as another option for communication and collaboration in a variety of public forums. For example, submissions to Parliamentary Committee Inquiries can be made online; and in the recent debate concerning the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement, DFAT electronically published information, undertook consultation, and invited online submissions.

**18. What new and/or innovative activity not outlined above is under consideration.**

Not applicable.