

## ICA Country Report 2004

### AUSTRALIA

#### 1. Brief description of the Government Structure

The Australian political system operates as a federation with three separate jurisdictions: federal (the 'Australian Government'), state and local governments. Under existing legislative and administrative structures, Australian Government agencies operate in a largely devolved management environment.

The organisational approach adopted by the Australian Government is agency-driven with shared leadership on multi-agency and whole-of-government initiatives, particularly in terms of information and communication technology (ICT) investment and governance issues.

Under this model:

- decisions and strategies relating to multi-agency and whole-of-government issues are determined through inter-departmental committees;
- promotion and coordination of these decisions is undertaken by a central agency; and,
- implementation is the responsibility of individual Australian Government departments and agencies.

For more information:

[http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/sys\\_gov.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/sys_gov.html)

<http://www.nla.gov.au/oz/gov/>

#### 2. The strategic approach towards e-Government

##### *Governance Framework*

On 8 April, the Minister announced the creation of the Australian Government Information Management [AGIMO] Office to focus on promoting and co-ordinating the efficient use of new ICT to the delivery of Australian Government programs and services. Its activities build on the work undertaken by the former National Office for the Information Economy [NOIE], providing strategic advice, activities and representation relating to the application of ICT to government administration, information and services. The official title of the Head of the Office is the Australian Government Chief Information Officer. [www.agimo.gov.au](http://www.agimo.gov.au)

The Information Management Strategy Committee [IMSC] and Chief Information Officer Committee [CIOC] continue to bring a whole-of-government focus on issues associated with the Government's use of ICT. With membership at portfolio level, the IMSC is currently focused on four areas which are discussed in more detail below:

- the draft Australian Government Authentication Framework;
- a technical interoperability framework for government;
- a guide to ICT sourcing for Australian Government agencies; and

- development of an access and distribution strategy for the delivery of Government services.

IMSC is supported by a whole of government CIO Committee. A new **CIO Forum** for the CIOs of small agencies has also been established to better consult and disseminate information around the uptake and implementation of ICT and to assist in implementing interoperable and consistent approaches. [www.imsc.gov.au](http://www.imsc.gov.au)

**The Online Council**, formed in 1997, is the peak ministerial forum across all three government jurisdictions (federal, state and local) for consultation and co-ordination on the information economy. Under its auspices, the **Integrated Transactions Reference Group** was established in 2002 to consider customer driven approaches that focus on access to services without the need for specific knowledge of the jurisdictional arrangements behind the delivery of services; and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of government through the integration of services.

### *E-Vision*

The Australian Government vision for e-government is articulated in *Better Services Better Government* (2002) and complemented by the MAC *Connecting Government* Report (2004) and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA), *Strategic Framework for the Information Economy, 2004-06*. AGIMO has contributed to the development of all these reports and statements. Furthermore AGIMO has engaged the academic sector to broaden consideration of e-government issues and those issues paper are found in the IPAA/AGIMO *E-government Challenge* report May 2004.

- *Strategic Framework for the Information Economy 2004-2006*  
(<http://www2.dcita.gov.au/ie/framework>)
- the MAC report *Connecting Government* released April 2004  
(<http://www.apsc.gov.au/mac/connectinggovernment.htm>)
- *Future Challenges in E-Government* May 2004  
([http://www.agimo.gov.au/publications/2004/05/egovt\\_challenges](http://www.agimo.gov.au/publications/2004/05/egovt_challenges))

## 3. Organisational Issues

### *Open Source*

A statement of the Government's position on the use of open source software by Australian Government agencies was released in August 2004. This paper seeks to provide factual information on the Government's approach to open source software and detail how the Australian government is providing a level playing field for all suppliers of software solutions to government.

As well as the position paper, the Government is preparing a range of tools to help government agencies evaluate emerging open source solutions against more familiar proprietary software on an informed basis and assess value for money and fit for purpose. These materials include an open source sourcing guide, case studies on implementation of open source solutions in a government context, information seminars and a 'Community of Practice' on open source and emergent technologies. [http://www.agimo.gov.au/infrastructure/oss/position\\_paper](http://www.agimo.gov.au/infrastructure/oss/position_paper)

### ***Authentication***

On 3 May 2004, the Minister released an exposure draft of the *Australian Government e-Authentication Framework* [AGAF]. The AGAF is based on a risk management approach and provides a means for aligning transaction requirements with authentication techniques to facilitate trust in online transactions. The AGAF recognises that different authentication mechanisms are needed for different types of transactions, depending on the degree of risk involved. The proposed framework is similar to online authentication frameworks in the UK, US and Canada.

The AGAF was developed in consultation with the key Commonwealth agencies through the Authentication Working Group [AWG] which is chaired by AGIMO. The government and the business community, represented by various peak bodies were consulted widely regarding the AGAF. The Framework has been considered by the Management Advisory committee [the MAC].

The Framework currently focuses on authenticating business. Future steps involve attaining government endorsement of the framework, and publication of better practice guides to assist both government agencies and business to implement the framework. <http://www.agimo.gov.au/infrastructure/authentication>

### ***Interoperability***

A working group on Information Interoperability was convened in May 2004. The Working Group addresses issues raised by the MAC report *Connecting Government* and the CIOC paper *Delivering Government Services* and supports the IMSC's goal of increased service integration. The Working Group will assist in the development of appropriate standards for using information across traditional agency boundaries while having due regard to all privacy and security requirements.

The *Technical Interoperability Framework* (the Framework) was released in November 2003. Developed in consultation with major Australian Government agencies, the Framework establishes standards for interoperability across agencies to improve ease of data exchange, enhance service delivery and reduce costs to government. It brings together collaborative projects across agencies, improving services through integration.

AGIMO continues to work with the Online Council's *Integrated Transactions Reference Group* (ITRG) to foster better services across jurisdictions through collaboration and integration. Over the past twelve months the following have been achieved:

- A National Services Improvement Framework and Principles for Collaboration have been developed and testing in pilot projects across jurisdictions are underway;
- Agreement has been reached to jointly fund across jurisdictions the National Service Improvement Project. This develops additional pilot projects with jurisdictions to further inform the Framework; and
- Agreement has been reached to develop a National Government Interoperability Framework. This framework will seek to align Commonwealth, State and Local Government interoperability frameworks in the context of standard reference architecture.

### *Communication*

AGIMO produces Better Practice Checklists to help web managers, business unit owners, and others quickly enhance their understanding of a range of issues associated with technology enabled government. New checklists cover issues such as content management, online policy consultation, website usage monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management, information architecture, website search facilities, spatial data, digitisation of records, access and equity issues for websites and marketing E-government initiatives. [www.agimo.gov.au/practice/delivery/checklists](http://www.agimo.gov.au/practice/delivery/checklists)

Communities of practice are practical vehicles for sharing and building knowledge and promoting better practice. They provide opportunities for government practitioners to share knowledge and solutions, build competency and expertise and thereby help achieve business results more effectively. Three Communities of Practice relating to e-government have been established: Content Management, Marketing of E-government services, and the interests of Australian Government agencies based in Victoria, with more in development.

<http://www.agimo.gov.au/resources/cop>

## **4. Operational Issues**

### *Measurement*

The 2003 E-government Benefits Study provided the first data on the value and benefit of e-government services. It quantified the key benefits of e-government services, established considerable value and recommended consistent methods to assess demand, value and agency return on investment. As a first step to establishing common measurement criteria, the **Demand and Value Assessment Methodologies** was released in May 2004.

The Demand and Value Assessment Methodologies assist agencies in developing transparent and auditable assessments of demand and value propositions for online-government programs. These propositions underpin the business case and assist in substantiating the viability of the initiative, in justifying resource investment and in demonstrating transparency and accountability. The methodology provides Government Agencies with an easy to audit tool for moving and extending services into the online environment. It draws on international best practice and is compatible with the Department of Finance budget estimate processes.

[www.agimo.gov.au/government/damvam](http://www.agimo.gov.au/government/damvam)

AGIMO commenced a further study in June 2004 to **measure Australians' use and satisfaction with e-government services across all levels of government**. This was initiated to better assess availability of government services through the Internet and alternative technologies. The project was also commenced to provide more meaningful Australian data with respect to:

- the range and uptake of government services available through the Internet and alternative communication technologies;
- profiling users and non-users of e-government;
- studying the behaviour of users of e-government across delivery channels;
- identifying impediments and barriers to interacting with government through the Internet and alternative communication technologies; and
- measuring user satisfaction.

Results will be available by January 2004.

### ***Access and Distribution Strategy***

The IMSC has agreed to the development of an Access and Distribution Strategy. The strategy aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government service delivery arrangements. It will support a networked environment based on standardised, as opposed to centralised, processes, where agencies work closely with customers, partners and each other to support service delivery excellence. This environment will enable Agencies to integrate processes, adopt interoperable infrastructure, share valuable information and collaborate from policy/program design to delivery. It will support a consistent customer experience across all Government agencies, improve the collaboration between agencies and improve the understanding of current and future service delivery capability.

## **5. Other Issues**

### ***Investment Model***

AGIMO is also reviewing investment models for ICT and with a view to releasing some new modelling tools in 2005.

### ***User Profiling and Testing Toolkit***

AGIMO published the User Profiling and Testing Toolkit in June 2004 to help agencies match their online content to the expectations of their customers. This toolkit was developed through a pilot project between AGIMO and a number of the Australian Government's customer centric portals.

The toolkit includes:

- Profiling - identifying typical customers and conducting interviews with them to determine the most important information and services they expect from a website. This helps to identify and prioritise content to be made available on a site.
- Useability testing - observing how customers use websites to find relevant content. This helps determine how best to present content.

<http://www.agimo.gov.au/publications/2004/06/toolkit>

### ***Australian Government Consultative Committee on Knowledge Capital***

Studies highlight that more than 60% of the assets of organisations are tied up in knowledge capital, which under current accounting rules and practices is neither represented nor valued. This applies to the public sector, as much as it does to the private sector, weakening the capacity to make well-informed investment decisions and underestimating the value created by agencies through the expenditure of public funds. To remedy this deficiency, which is particularly evident in projects involving ICT, in 2003 AGIMO established the Australian Government Consultative Committee on Knowledge Capital [AGGCKC].

The Committee's membership is drawn from the public, private and university sectors and includes senior representation from the accounting and actuarial professions. Its agenda is to develop mechanisms to measure knowledge capital and to have these mechanisms incorporated in government and international accounting standards.

The Committee, in cooperation with AGIMO, facilitated the establishment of a Centre for the Management of Knowledge Capital in public and private sector organisations at the Macquarie Graduate School of Management [MGSM], a first in Australia. The Centre commenced operations in March 2004 and is expected to make a major contribution to the work of the Committee.

The results of the Committee's work will be made public at an international conference on measuring knowledge capital, scheduled for October 2005.