



Australian Government

The Treasury

THE TREASURY'S SUBMISSION TO

Towards Government 2.0: An Issues Paper

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INTRODUCTION

The Treasury fully supports the goals for the Government 2.0 Taskforce. That is, to *“make government information more accessible and useable, to make government more consultative, participatory and transparent, to build a culture of online innovation, and to promote collaboration across agencies in online and information initiatives.”*

The Treasury believes that it is vital to ensure that public trust in government is strengthened by provision of accurate and authenticated information. Government 2.0 solutions should be supported by governance arrangements that ensure transparency and sensitivity to the policy environment in which agencies operate.

An information governance framework to support whole of government (cross-agency) activities is required irrespective of the medium of communication. Therefore, initiatives to promote cross-agency collaboration, by taking advantage of technological enablers, need to consider aspects of culture and business process – it is not enough just to provide a tool.

It is also important to remember that the business context should determine the channel used for information exchange. It would be a mistake to look at Government 2.0 from an information technology perspective. Rather it needs to be considered from a government communication or collaboration perspective. APS employees need to choose the most appropriate channels for communicating with stakeholders and follow best practice information management and communications protocols. Moderation of Web 2.0 interactions will be required in agencies to ensure that they have an ability to reproduce authentic evidence of communications.

COLLABORATION ACROSS AGENCIES

Information governance needs to be on the agenda in the context of Web 2.0 technologies, the delivery of government services and the management of information used in such contexts. A governance framework which supports business needs, while ensuring the security and integrity of agency network and business systems, should be developed at a whole of government level.

The Treasury is increasingly working with agencies in the Commonwealth and in other jurisdictions on whole-of-government activities. In this context, information management and recordkeeping (including ownership and management of records and the systems for this purpose) protocols or guidelines are needed for collaborative arrangements at a whole of government. (See also response to Questions 11 and 12 below.)

There have been a number of requests from within the Treasury for advice on the use of Web 2.0 tools. These requests suggest a gap between the business purpose for such tools and the governance around access and use to support agency business.

PRO-DISCLOSURE INFORMATION POLICY WITHIN GOVERNMENT

As [noted by Senator Faulkner](#) in May this year, the draft *Information Commissioner Bill 2009* and *Freedom of Information Amendment (Reform) Bill 2009* will require a change of attitude for agencies to think about what they *should* be publishing rather than what they are *obliged* to make public. However, Senator Faulkner also noted that

“Information created in ICT systems needs to be managed from creation to ensure accountability and to protect the legal and financial interests of the Commonwealth. Information also needs to be accessible over time to support business needs. This is just good practice.”

In the Government 2.0 context, a change in mindset is needed to implement appropriate protocols to ensure that Web 2.0 technologies are deployed to support this requirement. The use of such technologies will also require behavioral change from the relatively unfettered approach which is evident among users of tools such as Twitter, Facebook etc. While we accept that such use enables easier access to government, it also places increasing pressure on agencies to manage discrete communication and information tools responsibly.

The UK's [Template Twitter strategy for Government Departments](#) notes that agency digital media teams will be responsible for sourcing and publishing tweets, coordinating replies to incoming messages and monitoring the account. The Treasury draft policy on the use of social media has adopted a similar approach: only staff who are officially accredited to represent the Treasury in social media may use social media for business purposes. The Treasury has incorporated APSC's [Circular 2008/8: Interim protocols for online media participation](#) in our draft social media policy.

PRINCIPLES FOR QUALITY AND INTEGRITY OF INFORMATION

Question 11: *What should government do to foster a culture of compliance with information and records management policies and best practice?*

Recordkeeping should be embedded within agency business processes, and automated as much as possible. A whole of government approach to recordkeeping as a core business process across government would assist in resolution of this issue.

Agency-focussed records management systems and information management policies inhibit an agency's ability to support inter-agency collaboration, document exchange and management requirements, as deployment of such tools is focussed inevitably on internal compliance requirements. A coherent whole of government approach is not feasible or practical under the current model of agency-based business systems management. For Government 2.0 to succeed, a significant revision of this model will be needed.

As a result of largely localised practices, agencies now maintain a legacy of duplicated process and technological implementations of 'point solutions' (such as HR, records or financial management systems) which have met specific functional or business needs over time. As a result, data and information are being fragmented across agencies. There is also duplication of process, use of

paper as evidence to support digitally born and maintained data, and invariably a high degree of process inconsistencies. This in turn has the capacity to lead to the risk of sub-optimal advice and poor decision making and poor productivity. The risk in this environment is that advice to key stakeholders may be inconsistent, not authenticated or authoritative, or plainly wrong!

Question 12: *What recordkeeping challenges are posed by both the re-use of government information, and in the mechanisms of development of government policy and practice through interactive citizen engagement?*

Transparency, accessibility, reliability and integrity of government information will need to be guaranteed if Government 2.0 is to succeed.

Taking this into account the Treasury has identified business requirements to support inter-agency collaboration and improving communication between minister's offices including ease of use, governance and audit requirements, administration and support and the need for technical solutions which support

- synchronous collaborative authoring,
- capability to share documents,
- alert/ notification mechanisms,
- basic workflows discussion spaces for sharing ideas,
- commenting on documents etc,
- comprehensive search capability,
- taking into account security and other access requirements,
- ownership/ stewardship of content based also on compliance with information management obligations (e.g. recordkeeping, freedom of information, privacy, intellectual property).

DISCOVERABILITY UNDER FOI AND INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR

Question 23: *How can government make it easier for people to engage on policy and other issues and make sure the opportunities are as open and accessible as possible?*

The Treasury has begun to consider how to use wikis or blogs as a way to capture knowledge during the early part of a discussion which leads to a final (official) outcome - a way of generating, drafting and exchange of new ideas, policy proposals, etc. to support the Treasury's business. A pilot of how we can support this being done for tax and superannuation systems (please see below).

INNOVATION: THE TAX ISSUES ENTRY SYSTEM

Question 28: *How can government engage with individuals and stakeholders to support the development of innovative policies, programs, practices and service delivery? Are there good examples of where this is happening?*

The Tax Issues Entry System is an example of how the Government is making it easier for people to engage on policy and administrative matters within the taxation and superannuation systems.

The Government launched Tax Issues Entry System on 20 November 2008 as a pilot programme to be reviewed by the Board of Taxation after 12 months. The Tax Issues Entry System is a single entry point for tax professionals and the community to raise minor policy and administrative issues relating to the care and maintenance of the tax and superannuation systems. The Tax Issues Entry System arose from the recommendations of the Tax Design Review Panel report *Better Tax Design and Implementation* and had been originally recommended by the Board of Taxation in its February 2007 report *Improving Australia's Tax Consultation System*.

The Tax Issues Entry System is jointly managed by Treasury and the Australian Taxation Office, and can be accessed at www.ties.gov.au. Issues can be raised by completion of an electronic form on the website, email, telephone and mail. Acknowledgement letters are sent to correspondents on receipt of their issues. Feedback is provided on whether the issue is within the scope of the Tax Issues Entry System and how it will be resolved, and an explanation if it is outside the scope and a referral to other avenues for resolution. A public register of issues is available on the website to inform people of the issues being raised and the Government response to those issues.

Although this is a pilot programme, the response to date has been positive with a steady flow of issues being raised and number of matters being progressed for resolution. As with all pilot programmes, it is a work-in-progress to educate the public about the availability of this tool and the types of issues that it is designed to address.

Note that this initiative is also identified in the Department of Innovation's cross-government project to investigate how to advance innovation within and by the public sector under the auspices of the Management Advisory Committee (see <http://www.innovation.gov.au/Section/Innovation/Pages/AdvancingPublicSectorInnovation.aspx>). The discussion paper, *Advancing Public Sector Innovation* is at http://www.innovation.gov.au/Section/Innovation/Documents/MAC_Project_Discussion_Paper.pdf.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS IN THE LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

Does your agency currently use Web 2.0 tools to interact with the public? If so, which tools do you use for what purpose? What protocols do you have to guide staff in their use of the Web 2.0 tools (apart from the Australian Public Service Commission's interim protocols for online media participation by public servants, (<http://www.apsc.gov.au/circulars/circular088.htm>)?)

Answer

A draft *Social Media Usage Policy* has been prepared. The draft policy takes into account the Treasury's policy and guidelines on media contact and other APS sources including the following guidelines and protocols:

[APS Values and Code of Conduct in Practice](#), Chapter 3: Managing Official Information
[Circular No 2007/5: Involvement of public servants in public information and awareness initiatives](#)

[Circular 2008/8: Interim protocols for online media participation](#) (APSC)

[Guidelines on campaign advertising by Australian Government departments and agencies](#)
(Department of Finance and Deregulation, June 2008)

[Online Consultation Guidelines](#) (AGIMO)

[Using YouTube](#) (AGIMO)

The Standard Business Reporting Program is trialling a blog and will be supporting downloading of video in the near future.

Initiatives and related activities in APS agencies and other jurisdictions are being monitored.

What datasets do you publish online, and in what format/s? Are there datasets to which you have access that might be published in a more timely fashion?

None at present.

What would the implications be for your agency if you were asked to publish that data in open formats (a) from a specified time and (b) retrospectively, and to keep the data up-to-date?

This will need to be considered as the Treasury develops policy around sharing data sets with the public.

Do you currently charge for information you provide and on what basis (e.g. cost recovery or at commercial rates)? What would be the costs to your agencies if you were asked to provide this information/these datasets online at no, or minimal cost?

This will need to be considered as the Treasury develops policy around sharing data sets with the public.

What would be the implications for your agency if you were to publish information under an open licensing system, such as a Creative Commons license?

Routinely Treasury publications are managed in accordance with Commonwealth guidelines, including a departmental *Intellectual Property Policy*.

What are the risks to your agency if the information/datasets you publish online were able to be re-used by the public, i.e. used for a range of other purposes including combining with other data?

This will need to be considered as the Treasury develops policy around sharing data sets with the public.