



Australian Government
Department of Human Services

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Dear Dr Gruen

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input and contribute to the Government 2.0 Taskforce. The Secretary, Ms Helen Williams, has asked me to respond on her behalf. This response includes input from the Department - which includes the Child Support Program and CRS Australia - and agencies within the Portfolio including Medicare Australia and Centrelink.

The Human Services Portfolio supports initiatives that seek to build more interactive and inclusive online engagement with citizens. The Portfolio has provided responses to the 4 key questions provided in the discussion paper. In addition, Medicare Australia has provided a response to the detailed questions and this is included as an attachment.

How can we build a culture from within government which favours the disclosure of public sector information?

'Public sector information' encompasses an extremely broad range of information. Public sector decisions in relation to the disclosure of government information are often informed by government decisions and public service procedures. Cultural considerations are driven in large part by these decisions and policies.

Public sector information is collected and developed by government for a variety of purposes and, while there are opportunities to share more information with citizens, in many instances it is not appropriate or practical to do so.

From a Human Services perspective, agencies regularly provide information to citizens to help keep them informed on their interactions with government. This not only provides citizens with updated information about their own needs, it also provides them with a mechanism to engage with government.

What government information should be more freely available and what might be made of it?

The Human Service Portfolio supports the sharing of appropriate information, but notes that a range of factors need to be considered when undertaking such an activity.



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The Government determines the criteria and circumstances under which information is disclosed. Generally speaking, information that relates to citizens and their dealings with government could be made more easily accessible. This would, however, require changes to legislation and privacy protocols in many scenarios.

What are the major obstacles to fostering a culture of online engagement within government and how can they be tackled?

In order to move towards greater sharing and disclosure of government information, a range of privacy, security and legal issues need to be considered. Due to the broad ranging nature of public sector information, it is important to ensure that there is citizen demand for the information being sought.

In many instances, there will be budgetary considerations in making information to the public. While this should not in itself been seen as a reason for not progressing down this path, it is important to ensure that there is sufficient demand to warrant such approaches.

How can government capture the imagination of citizens to encourage participation in policy development and collaboration between citizens and government?

A move towards greater use of online engagement in policy development could be used more progressively. Such online engagement should be trialled initially through online forums that complement existing methods of engagement. It would be important to target areas of policy where the target audience impacted by the policy is likely to be savvy in Web 2.0 technologies.

Following such trials, valuable lessons could be learned before deploying online engagement mechanisms more broadly to policy development initiatives.

Conclusion

We look forward to seeing the results of the taskforce and would welcome any further discussion or consultation that may be of interest to you. If you require any further information or would like to discuss elements of this submission, please contact Christine Pitt, Assistant Secretary Technology Architecture, at christine.pitt@humanservices.gov.au or on (02) 6223 4416.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Marie Johnson', with a horizontal line underneath.

Marie Johnson
A/g Deputy Secretary, Technology and Corporate
28 August 2009



Response to Towards Government 2.0 - Taskforce Issues Paper

August 2009

Background

Medicare Australia has implemented many online services for both citizens and health professionals. There are large amounts of information freely available on the web site. Citizens and health professionals have an option to login to their own account with Medicare Australia, enabling tailored information to be accessed. There is also the ability to update their personal details and review usage history or request additional services. Over one million citizens now have a login account enabling access 24 hours x 7 days per week all year round.

In addition, real-time entitlement checking, access to Medicare claiming and Pharmacy PBS claiming over the Internet provide convenient ways for citizens to interact with government. The majority of interactions with Medicare Australia are already electronic.

Medicare Australia notes there is a need for both authenticated access to personal information and non-authenticated and or anonymous access to non personal information about services. This equally applies to all our different stakeholder requirements. Emerging technologies will further enable increased two way communication with government and allow for an increase in the availability of tailored information for enhanced service delivery. Web 2.0 could play a major role in future eHealth services, especially in remote regions of Australia.

Disclaimer: The following response includes only ideas and suggestions for input into the Government 2.0 taskforce, the responses are not necessarily policy.

Key Questions

Public sector information

Medicare Australia agrees that more can be done to enable access to public sector information. This will facilitate citizens gaining additional information about their government service entitlements, regardless of their location. Privacy of personal information is paramount and must not be compromised when utilising new technology.

Digital engagement

Feedback from stakeholders on how service delivery is performed is already undertaken; however further engagement with a much wider stakeholder group (in a workable forum) will enhance and improve service delivery options.

Taskforce Questions

<p>Question 1: How widely should policy to optimise the openness of public sector information be applied? Should it be applied beyond government departments and, if so, to which bodies, for instance government business enterprises or statutory authorities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As services are delivered across the three levels of Government, a consistent whole of government (WoG) approach should be adopted. - Initially however, the focus should be where there would be the best return on investment to facilitate genuine engagement. - This would provide an insight to all departments on the benefits and issues involved. Over time the policy scope can be expanded.
<p>Question 2: What are the ways in which we build a culture within government which favours the disclosure of public sector information? What specific barriers exist that would restrict or complicate this and how should they be dealt with?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A large amount of information is already available, where public information is not readily available this can be due to the costs involved - There are risks regarding accuracy of historical data. eg loss or incomplete - Ongoing maintenance resources to ensure timeliness of the information - Warning about data accuracy – disclosure statement - Options for user pays
<p>Question 3: What government information would you like to see made more freely available?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - eg estimates for out of pocket health expenses before services are provided - eHealth (Electronic Health Records) – information online but secure - Single view of Customer – information on actual government involvement in the transaction - Consolidated statement of benefits/services from Government being used and others that are available

<p>Question 4: What are the possible privacy, security, confidentiality or other implications that might arise in making public sector information available? What options are there for mitigating any potential risks?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opt in / opt out with consent - Disclosure of Risks - Policies and standards around deidentified data - Electronic 'fingerprint' to enable original authenticity of source of information - Policy on closing down inappropriate sites linking to government sites - Code of Conduct for Service Providers - Risk around aggregation of data and identity fraud
<p>Question 5: What is needed to make the large volume of public sector information (a) searchable and (b) useable? And in each case, what do we do about legacy information in agencies? How might the licensing of on-line information be improved to facilitate greater re-use where appropriate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data classification - Government Thesaurus - Australian Standards - Storage – provide tools for citizens to self extract information - Licensing – Cost – Pay subscription for services or pay for tools - Acknowledgment of original source is needed - Electronic 'fingerprint' to enable original authenticity of source of information - Legacy information - OCR – up to each Agency – Business case and demand and data quality issues. - 'Broker service' to enable access to data across Agencies

<p>Question 6: How does government ensure that people, business, industry and other potential users of government information know about, and can readily find, information they may want to use, for example, the use of a consolidated directory or repository for public sector information?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subscribe/Unsubscribe services - Trolling agents - Broker service - Search engines
<p>Question 7: Should governments mandate that information should be only kept and stored in open and publicly documented standards? Could such a stipulation raise costs or reduce flexibility?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should be stored using open standards, although it will cost more to the supplier in the short term. This will enable it to be technology neutral. - Use some form of tagging is needed
<p>Question 8: What approaches should the Government use to allow information to be easily shared?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brokering Services - Freely available tools - Real time - A consolidated statement of utilised services. Tailored to the user.
<p>Question 9: How can the initiatives and ideas of agencies be harnessed for the benefit of agencies across government? How can duplication of effort be avoided?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Broker services and lead Agency approach - Data and information sharing - Use of Standards - Coordination of Channels and services - Government coordinating point – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o feedback o public engagement - Whole of Government approach eg AGIMO

<p>Question 10: Are these complaints and appeals processes sufficient? Are additional processes needed for government as it engages in the Web 2.0 world?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Service Provider Code of Conduct for usage - Anonymous usage where appropriate - Jurisdiction issues around users out of Australia - Policy needed to enable user being able to correct incorrect information
<p>Question 11: What should government do to foster a culture of compliance with information and records management policies and best practice?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Code of Conduct - Ethical behaviour guidelines - No anti competitive behaviour - Foster code of data quality - Standardise the concept of operations - Operational procedures - Service level standards - Risk around aggregation of data and identity fraud
<p>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?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If provided with information that is then reused out of context - Disclosure – Tag line with time, date, who printed it - Log information that's provided - Source of Truth – traceability - Digital fingerprint/watermark - Meta tags to support the information

<p>Question 13: How does government manage the costs and risks of publication of inaccurate information?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disclaimers - Reliability rating – criteria based
<p>Question 14: What criteria might we adopt in ensuring that agencies make data available in a reasonable time-frame? (And how might we define a 'reasonable time-frame'?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Service Providers – Service Level Agreements - Data Broker to help smaller Agencies - Cost Recovery –for a faster response - Business case driven
<p>Question 15: It often takes quite some time to compile and create consistent and reliable data – especially for large data sets. When is it appropriate to release limited and possibly less accurate data and where is it appropriate to wait for higher quality and more extensive data? Where various principles are in some tension with each other, for instance quality and cost or timeliness, how should trade-offs be made?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case by Case - Depends on data context, content and rating of quality of data - Data ageing is an issue - Replacing old data - Over time with improvement of technology /automation this would be less of an issue

<p>Question 16: What can we do to better promote and co-ordinate initiatives in this area? How can we draw key departments together?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inter Departmental Committee - AGIMO - Forums/Industry - Stakeholder engagement - Case studies / lead Agency approach
<p>Question 17: What sort of public sector information should be released under what form of copyright license? When should government continue to utilise its intellectual property rights?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use existing IP Policy - Fingerprint of Data - Royalty free usage - Develop/adopt Open Licensing where appropriate
<p>Question 18: When should agencies charge for access to information? Should agencies charge when they are providing value-added services? What might constitute 'value added services' (eg customisation of information)? In what circumstances should agencies be able to recover the costs of obtaining the information or providing access? A common model in the private sector is 'freemium' distribution whereby many, often most, users are supplied with some product or service for free whilst others pay for use in large scale commercial enterprise (for instance AVG anti-virus) or for some premium product (for instance Word Web). Are there similar models for public sector information and/or do they merit further consideration?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - User pays approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Little information charge less o More information charge more - Free use of information from Government agency to Government agency - Data ownership and public interest issues - Whole of Government approach needed—consistency

<p>Question 19: How can government take advantage of public private partnerships to increase access to public sector information without unduly constraining opportunities for third parties to use and reuse the information?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Broker Service with Citizen consent - Improved services to Citizens - Can facilitate improved outcomes - Already providing public/provider access at point of service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Medicare Australia Eclipse Private Health claims o Medicare Online Entitlement checking
<p>Question 20: What international activities relevant to this Taskforce should the Taskforce be considering and what needs to be done to improve cross-border use and interoperability of information?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International Standards - Trends - Interoperability framework - OECD Principles
<p>Question 21: How can best practice be facilitated, identified, rewarded, and further propagated?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government Innovation Awards - 'League table' approach - Incentive where there is a public benefit
<p>Question 22: Have you engaged with the Australian government via a Web 2.0 channel? Which one/s? If so, why and what was your experience? If not, why not? What can be improved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medicare Australia – examples are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Health Professional Online Services portal - approximately 4000 users o Citizen Online Services – 1.23M users o Electronic claiming o Blogs o AGIMO GovDex

<p>Question 23: How can government capture the imagination of citizens to encourage participation in policy development and collaboration between citizens and government?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advertising - Providing services that people want to use - Make it channel of choice - Public empowerment
<p>Question 24: What sort of privacy issues might dissuade individuals from engaging with government via collaborative technologies? What sort of steps can we take to ensure that personal information is used appropriately? What options are there for mitigating any potential privacy risks?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce Identity fraud - Code of Conduct - Consent - Ability to change incorrect data - Authenticated/ Unauthenticated access options - Trust of data - Reputation – track record - Education and Awareness
<p>Question 25: 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?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make available on many channels (not just one technology) - Give people time to respond - Format tailored for the customer
<p>Question 26: What trade-offs must be considered between government using commercially available and popular online platforms and ensuring inclusive participation with all members of society and how should those tradeoffs be made?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple channels - Usage costs vs availability - Consider services available through community access points such as public libraries

<p>Question 27: How can public servants comply with the APS values¹ and other protocols whilst still participating in online engagement? Should existing rules including legislation be changed and/or adapted to facilitate greater online engagement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No change to APS values is needed – channel independent - Protocols should be used when answering blogs - Question/Answer process - Procedures required for quality control
<p>Question 28: How does government provide sufficient room for personal debate and passionate dissent but still ensure appropriate levels of moderation in online forums? Should moderation be 'outsourced' and if so in what circumstances and how? How might volunteers from the commenting community be selected to moderate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Code of Conduct - Protocols - Enrolment in the service
<p>Question 29: What are the barriers to fostering a culture of online innovation within government? Which of those barriers should be maintained in any Government 2.0 initiatives? Which of those barriers should be removed? How should this be achieved? What different norms can or should apply to Government 2.0 efforts?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protocols - Agencies already would have stakeholder forums. This would be an extension on a larger scale. - Improved timeliness is required. - Quality of service and advice needs to be maintained

¹ <http://www.apsc.gov.au/values/index.html> and <http://www.apsc.gov.au/conduct/index.html>

<p>Question 30: To what extent can government assist the uptake of Government 2.0 by centrally providing standard business management guidance and tools to avoid agencies having to 'reinvent the wheel' when considering their own online engagement guidelines?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brokering Service - Lead Agency approach - Whole of Government approach - Ethical behaviour guidelines - No anti competitive behaviour - Foster code of data quality - Standard operational procedures - Service level standards
<p>Question 31: 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?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full collaborative design across Government - Co-design - Medicare Australia ECLIPSE system in conjunction with Private Health Insurers and Hospitals
<p>Question 32: To what extent can we promote such an approach in the public sector and are there any examples of emerging practice?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-design - Consumer consultative group
<p>Question 33: How can such expertise be governed so as not to unduly stifle innovation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be channel / technology independent - Lead Agency approach - Run a pilot/prototype - genuine feedback on pilot

<p>Question 34: To what degree is the opportunity for Government agencies to participate in the Web 2.0 world inhibited, or severely compromised, by issues such as security? How might this problem be overcome, in general and by individual agencies, within current legal and policy parameters and how might these parameters be changed to assist in overcoming these problems?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Block inappropriate sites - Use different infrastructure - Separation of the environments - Code of Conduct - Provide authenticated and non authenticated access options to different levels of data
<p>Question 35: What role could the proposed OIC play in encouraging the development of Government 2.0? Are there practical recommendations the Taskforce might make about how the OIC might best fulfil its functions in relation to optimising the dissemination of Government information?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Best Practise Guidelines - Citizen Consent - Selection of Standards - Work with jurisdictions for a consistent approach