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The Government 2.0 Task Force Secretariat
Department of Finance and Deregulation
John Gorton Building
King Edward Terrace
Parkes ACT 2600
by email (submissions@gov2.net.au)

Towards Government 2.0: An Issues Paper

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute Google's views to the Taskforce's consideration of the *Towards Government 2.0* reference. In this document we start by highlighting some interesting scene setting developments, we then summarise our views of the main issues raised in the Issues Paper, we provide some information about Google and its presence in Australia, and conclude with responses to the individual questions – this last part is included as an annex.

Setting the Scene

We welcome the publication of the Issues Paper under a Creative Commons Licence, the Taskforce making available a blog to facilitate open dialogue and debate, the constructive and open engagement of members of the Taskforce and members of the Australian Public Service in making postings to the blog, and the sensible and liberal moderation policy in relation to the blog. As the Taskforce intended, these initiatives are good examples of how Government can engage in *government 2.0* without enabling regulation.

We also welcome the Australian Public Service trialling Interim Protocols for Online Media Participation. Many issues will no doubt be identified through this trial and re-visited before these Protocols are finalised. For example, we consider that members of the Australian Public Service should be able to make attributed comments in fulfilment of their official duties and as part of their work environment that do not necessarily represent the views of their agency, and the default might be that their views do not unless stated otherwise. This is the customary default setting by corporations that permit their employees to blog on an attributed basis, then backed by internal protocols and approval processes as appropriate to the organisation and its culture.

Community building and engaging the community

The posting on the threads *Government 2.0 – It's the Community, Stupid* and *The Faceless Bureaucrat and Web 2.0* at <http://gov2.net.au/> includes some great comments around use of web 2.0 for government and agencies to consult with business and citizens. As Craig Thomler posted on the first thread on 11 August, "Building a community is one of the toughest tasks any organisation can take on, particularly for a short-life project, such as a consultation process. Long-term communities take substantial, often fanatical, commitment to maintain. Therefore in my view it almost always makes more sense for government to understand the online landscape, find appropriate pre-existing communities and work with them as partners through the consultation or initiative process. It makes even more sense to become an ongoing participant in these communities, establishing the government as a digital native and building the trust and credibility necessary to get deeper and more thoughtful insights from citizens, rather than simply the positions of strong-willed individuals." This would require enabling members of the Australian Public Service to be able to participate in fast-moving dialogues, and creating a safe culture for them to do so.



Summary of Google's views

Google strongly endorses the Government's proposal that the policy and culture of Federal Government and its agencies be changed to ensure that information held by Federal Government and its agencies is made available easily, widely and equitably to citizens except where good reasons preclude such availability.

The Government's Election 2007 Policy Document '*Government Information :Restoring Trust and Integrity*¹' stated four key changes to be implemented by this Government, the first being to "drive a culture shift across the bureaucracy to promote a pro-disclosure culture". Proactive publication of government information and provision of open and transparent access to a broad range of government information, subject only to reasoned exceptions, is consistent with the Government's policy commitments and international best practice as promoted by the OECD and policy that is in the course of implementation in many OECD countries including the United Kingdom, the United States of America and New Zealand.

Government held information is created or collected by Government, at the expense of taxpayers, as a strategic resource for the benefit of its citizens. Generally consumer benefit is maximised by early and full access to the broad range of government information as noted in the *2007 UK Power of Information Report*² and the DBCDE paper *Australia's Digital Economy: Future Directions*³

As stated by Senator Kate Lundy in her *Three Pillar of Open Government* posting⁴

"as has been evident in the US for many years, open access to government data can dramatically increase the value created from the data both socially and economically. This means the society as a whole benefits from access to the data. Public sector information ought to be in the public domain not just to facilitate innovation in the public and private spheres, but to enable individual citizens to make informed choices"

As the Taskforce has identified, there will need to be a **change of culture** within government to stimulate provision of access to a much broader range of data and information and to facilitate engagement of Government officials in information dialogue and knowledge building through the use of web 2.0 -enable collaborative tools whether on government websites or elsewhere. This cultural change should extend to provision of access to government data in a raw form: Government should not see its primary role as being to value add and create retail consumer experiences across Government data sets. We later in this submission give examples of initiatives that Government might sponsor to effect and embed the cultural changes that are required. We suggest that Government will need to champion these changes and ensure that momentum is built across Government. This requires central policy setting and coordination and champions to extol and exemplify best practice. Changes to regulation will also be important, but regulatory change is secondary to the fundamental changes in Government culture that are now required.

Meanwhile, in blog land...

In a current post in a UK Cabinet Office *Digital Engagement* blog (<http://blogs.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digitalengagement/>), Richard Stirling is asking the British public how a UK version of the US data.gov site should be implemented (see blogs.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digitalengagement/post/2009/05/22). A number of respondents to that post note that the key barrier to be overcome is not the definition of standards and syndication methods: the barrier is lack of buy-in by

¹ (see http://www.alp.org.au/download/now/071026_government_information_policy.pdf)

² See <http://poit.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/poit/>

³ http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digital_economy/future_directions_of_the_digital_economy/ pages 12-13

⁴ See <http://www.katelundy.com.au/2009/06/20/three-pillars-of-open-government/>



data owners within Government departments and agencies as to why access to raw data is important and how to provide this access. As stated by one blogger: "In my experience trying to explain to the economists and statisticians (and sometimes, politicians) that it is good open and unmassaged data that we need to release, rather than lovely Excel spreadsheets with artfully built pivot tables, or reports with expert commentary, [and this] is going to be the bigger battle than us all agreeing in geek world that it should be done and how. The technology can wait, and is easily solved, getting the data is the key." Similar comments appear in many of the posting on the threads *Making more government data and information available* and *What data should we be releasing?* at <http://gov2.net.au/>. Many commentators suggest: get the data into the open, with appropriate disclaimers, in whatever searchable and indexable form such data can be made available without undue delay or expense, rather than waiting for standards to emerge or requiring any central definition of standards or central repository for data. These can follow as and when appropriate.

The Information Commissioner as proposed in the Government's exposure draft *Freedom of Information Amendment (Reform) Bill 2009* (currently subject to revision) and the Australian Government Information Management Office could be an important champions encouraging and rewarding Government departments and agencies for more broad dissemination of information, including raw data.

This championship could usefully include creation of a central point of entry for accessing data (the data.gov model). Alan Noble (a member of the Taskforce and Google's head of engineering for Australia) has noted that this approach can be "a huge, ambitious, centralised undertaking" or "cathedral", as characterised in his post "*data.gov and lessons from the open source world*" at <http://gov2.net.au/> - or a more decentralised "bazaar" of agency sites that "is flexible and economical and supports evolutionary change. It [the bazaar] enables different government agencies to move at different speeds to open up public sector information, one set at a time". As postings to this thread note, the bazaar will only work if the culture and incentives for individual agencies promote opening up of data sets and these data sets are then made readily accessible: in some cases a more centralised approach may be necessary to create these incentives or otherwise to mandate provision of open access to government information, or provide an under-resourced agencies with a convenient platform to put particular data sets before the public with appropriate resilience, security, licence terms and disclaimers.

A way of approaching this may be:

- 1) don't delay creation of availability (a 'shopping experience') for government information by trying to build a cathedral, if a bazaar can deliver a satisfactory experience and particularly where a bazaar more readily accommodates diversity and innovation in offerings by individual government departments and agencies;
- 2) the bazaar must be navigable – that is, discoverable and searchable, both technically (through open robots.txt, site maps, etc) and legally (through friendly copyright, provisions such as Creative Commons, etc.) – provide citizens and business with a satisfactory 'shopping experience' for government information. The bazaar can be de-centralised and diverse if open and navigable;
- 3) because of (2), it does not necessarily follow that you need a central data repository or central indexes;
- 4) the bazaar can be made navigable through government facilitated search, from a central jump off point or from government maintained indexes or reliance upon third party search engines, or any combination of these. The www.openaustralia.org.au beta site is an interesting example of a non-government attempt to make *Hansard* more navigable and therefore useful. Navigation might be based principally or solely on search, third party data mash-ups or other third party vendor solutions if the market was considered likely to develop user experiences that are intuitive. I;
- 5) because of (4), it does not necessarily follow that Federal Government needs a central jump off point (supersite). Third party search may work so long as departments and agencies



'vending' information in a bazaar have the right incentives to 'vend' their information in the bazaar, and that information is navigable.

Some commentators have suggested that the Obama Administration's promotion of *data.gov* creates an unnecessary and expensive 'cathedral'. However, the initiative does promote increased public access to high value, machine readable (discoverable and searchable) data sets, promotes standardisation of that access and thereby linking to and use of that data, and by promoting visibility of what *is* available from U.S. Federal Administration agencies, stimulates consideration of what is *not* available and whether it should be.

Downloadable data sets facilitate public participation and collaboration, by facilitating access to information through search engines and enabling developers to build applications, conduct analyses and perform research. *data.gov* also provides a convenient point of entry to US State and local data sites, encouraging State and local government to launch their own sites with convenient and searchable access to raw data and information. A *data.gov.au* point of entry to information held by Federal Government departments and agencies would also set a benchmark for State governments and local authorities in relation to access to their data, further promoting best practice by all levels of Government in Australia.

To further promote cultural change within all levels of Government, Government should recognise and reward great examples of use by Federal departments and agencies of data and by developers outside Government, including through an awards program and other benefits targeted to stimulate and highlight excellence and innovation in provision of access to and use of Government information. Google commends the Taskforce's endorsement of contests, as announced in the thread *Hack, Mash and Innovate: Contest Coming Soon* at gov2.net.au. These contests might include best implementation and use of social networking, blogging and other collaboration tools, as well as facilitation of access to government information.

In relation to the question of 'what government information should be released?', the default should be **publication of all government held data and information** unless any of a defined list of reasons for non-disclosure are given in relation to specified information by a department or agency. This is consistent with the Government's policy of moving the culture to openness unless there is a good reason for access to be closed. If it was considered necessary to support this cultural change by regulatory mandate or by central oversight, this could be by amendment to the draft FOI Bill and subject to the oversight of the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner, after appropriate consultation (for example, with the Commonwealth Chief Information Officer and AGIMO), might be empowered to issue policy guidance to departments and agencies in relation to disclosure and publication of categories of information held by departments and agencies as specified in that policy guidance, not only those categories of operational and related information as referred to in clause 8 of the exposure draft FOI Bill.

Clearly however, some categories of Government information may reasonably be excepted from access, or accessible only as to part. In Google's view appropriate reasons are now identifiable. They are: protection of national security, protection of personal information (privacy), ensuring that efficient processes for formulation of policy within Government are not impeded, and in order to preserve commercial sensitivity and confidentiality, both in relation to government created trade secret information (such as CSIRO or NICTA research findings) and trade secret information of others that is entrusted in confidence to government and its agencies. These qualifications (reasons for non-disclosure) are equally applicable to departments, agencies and authorities that are not fully commercial business enterprises (e.g. NICTA and CSIRO) or engaged in national security (e.g. ASIO and ASIS).

Policies as to access to Government information that are of general application to Australian Government departments and agencies might be formulated and implemented by the Information Commissioner, after appropriate consultations with stakeholders. Following a transition or phase-in phase, information held by individual departments and agencies might be excepted from open and pro-active access only where relevant categories of information are identified and the reasons for



application of a particular exception (as identified in the last paragraph) by an individual department or agency are published by an officer of that department or agency and readily accessible in a central access point (e.g. data.gov.au).

Government information should generally be made available under permissive and transparent licence terms, such as an Australian Government **Creative Commons** licence in terms as approved by the Information Commissioner. These licence terms should be clear and readily available. This should be the standard licence or permission for access to and use, unless good reasons are given in relation to specific raw data or information as to why that raw data or information should be subject to more restrictive licence terms, such as the Crown's specific entitlements (Crown copyright) under the Australian Copyright Act or the more broad general entitlements of the Crown generally under the Australian Copyright Act as the employer of authors.

Raw data and information is expensive to process and present in useful form. Processing and presentation of information by Government requires difficult and often contentious decisions to be made about selection of information, analytical engines, presentation formats and standards, timeliness of data refresh, as to appropriate disclaimers of reliability and liability, and about permitted access modes. As stated by Senator the Honourable Joe Ludwig in announcing this Taskforce:

"...having vast quantities of information available on the web is the endpoint. The endpoint is also ensuring that the information is usable in a way both government and the public expects it to be. The formats and standards used for publications must really encourage innovation from that type of information."

As already stated above, Government does not need to undertake an extensive or exhaustive process to define standards or formats before Government agencies make available particular data sets or information. Nor does it require substantial investment by Government in development of analysis or presentation layers for information or 'retail' presentation formats. There is no specific format in which public sector information should be made available. Industry is able to provide solutions that are responsive to the format in which information is provided, provided that information is discoverable and searchable, both technically and legally. It should be made available to open standards and ideally open source. Where public sector information is already online and the objective is to make it more visible in search engines, this can be done through implementing the Site Maps open protocol.

Google submits that Government should generally not see its role as to develop consumer interfaces or presentation formats or other solutions that provide a 'retail' experience where Government considers that the commercial (non-Government) market might reasonably be expected to develop a variety of modes of access to and presentation of raw Government data. In other words, in order of priority Government and agencies should be: first provide access to raw data; next, provide application program interfaces (**APIs**) to open standards on top of that data for developers and outside organisations to use; and last (if Government then considers this desirable and the market unlikely to provide an intuitive and attractive way for citizens to access and use data) to provide a retail experience to citizens. Where Government elects to provide a retail experience to citizens, Government generally should do so using the APIs as published for developers and outside organisations to use, and the bulk data that it makes available to developers and outside organisations.

There are four substantial reasons for Government to take a **'wholesaler, not retailer'** approach:

- Data and information rapidly loses its value during the time between collection of that data and its dissemination. Early availability in a useable form by others enables the information to be processed and made available on a timely basis and thereby maximises its value to citizens. The more Government seeks to value add to data to create analysed or transformed information, the greater the likelihood that the information will cease to be timely, and the more difficulties will be created for third parties undertaking comparative analysis of the underlying data with other data (for example, through data mash-ups).



- Except where there is a compelling reason why Government information should not be published, Government's mandate might reasonably be said to be: to place information before as many eyes as possible. To get the most eyes on data, data should be put in the hands of multiple parties that can present the data to their constituencies. This is the application of the Web 2.0 paradigm to Government information.
- Government has a monopoly on Government information. This information is collected in Government's role as steward for the public and as a monopoly resource, generally should be subject to open access policy developed consistently with Government competition policy and not subject to monopoly pricing.
- Granting access to raw data saves taxpayers' money. If Government does rely upon outside organisations to build engines for access to data and engagement around data, Government can save millions of dollars and ensure that Government and its departments and agencies are not second guessing industry about likely developments in web searching and presentation analytics and trying to 'pick winners'.

In general this information should be made available **without charge**. Cost-based pricing to recover the cost of dissemination may be appropriate where it is both feasible and cost-effective to levy such a charge, or where information has been produced for a commercial purpose of sale at a profit. Where information has been produced by a Government department or agency for sale at a profit, the department or agency should also ensure that the raw data that has been used to produce that information is made available to enable others to process and analyse that data, unless a good reason for not doing so has been published by the government data 'owner' (under the oversight of an 'independent eye' within Government, such as the Information Commissioner).

Google notes that the proposals outlined above would implement the OECD Council's *Recommendation for Enhanced Access and More Effective Use of Public Sector Information*⁵ as referred to in the Task Force's Paper. The proposals are also consistent with the European Union's approach in its *Directive on the Reuse of Public Sector Information*⁶. The United Kingdom leads the EU in implementing the Reuse Directive. For example, in a current UK Cabinet Office Digital Engagement blog⁷ Richard Stirling is asking the British public how a UK version of the US data.gov site should be implemented. Google's proposals are also consistent with the quite developed views of the New Zealand Government, in its *Policy Framework for Government-held Information*⁸, New Zealand's *E-government Strategy* (available through www.e.govt.nz) and its State Services Commission's *Open Government Information and Data Reuse Project*⁹

⁵ See www.oecd.org/dataoecd/0/27/40826024.pdf

⁶ (2003/98/EC dated 17 November 2003) (ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/psi-doc/pdf/directive/psi_directive_en.pdf)

⁷ (see blogs.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digital-engagement/post/2009/05/22)

⁸ (www.e.govt.nz/policy/information-data/framework.html)

⁹ (see www.govt.nz/policy/information-data).



About Google

Google's mission is to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. This means giving our users around the world access to the information they want, from the widest variety of sources, wherever they are. We believe this brings people greater choices, new freedoms, and ultimately more power.

Search is at the heart of what we do – we help people find things. From a finding a licensed electrical contractor, to a blog for fellow young mums, to an up to the minute share price, to a map of a new town you are visiting - - - the subject matter ranges from the entertaining to the educational and potentially life-changing.

Desert Flowers

The State of Arizona's Government Information Technology Agency (GITA) made hundreds of thousands of public records and other web pages 'crawlable' to search engines and visible in Google search results. Research has shown that as many as 4 in 5 internet users reach government and other public sector websites by using Google and other search engines.

Early in 2007, GITA undertook a partnership with Google to make it easier for citizens using search engines to access the information and services that Arizona provides. At the heart of the partnership was implementing the Sitemap Protocol, an open technical standard that is widely supported in the search engine industry. The technology provides a mechanism that allows website owners to systematically communicate a list, or 'map', of all the pages in a website to search engines. This ensures that search engines can "crawl" parts of a website that would otherwise be invisible, including records in databases. These Site Maps provide a comprehensive list of pages on a website for search engine callers, not simply a directory to help use and navigate for site: see further www.google.com/publicsector. For example, a building contractor's licence status can be determined by a simple Internet search on the name of the contractor. According to Lisa Meyerson, Strategic Initiatives Unit Chief for GITA and coordinator of the Arizona-Google partnership, it took less than 50 hours of staff time to implement Sitemaps in eight major databases. Plans for phase two of the partnership include implementing the protocol for many other agency websites and databases.

See further <http://www.google.com/publicsector/arizona.html> and the FAQs as to the Sitemap Protocol at <http://www.google.com/publicsector/faq.html>.

Google's mission is to organise – not create – information. We are one of the few Internet companies in the world that actually want to see people move off our site as fast as possible – because that means we've put them in contact with what they're looking for.

Australia is a vital country for Google. In June 2009 the Governor-General opened Google Australia's new headquarters in Pyrmont. The 350 person office covers Sales, Engineering, Network Operations, Business Development and more. Sydney is the base for Google's activities in Australia and New Zealand while also providing support for the entire Australia-Pacific region. This year Google Australia was placed number one by the Great Place to Work Australia™ Institute and *BRW* Magazine.

We support Australia's vital IT sector through employment, industry engagement, education, access to code and initiatives to encourage a new generation of IT professionals by:

- providing a stimulating, nurturing place to work for Australia's most talented software engineers;
- opening up Google products to the open source community to foster innovative services and mash-ups;



- sponsoring university programs and prizes and close involvement with university IT and Engineering departments, including through scholarships, summer internships and student days;
- hosting developer events, such as the Cloud Camp “unconference” for early adopters of cloud computing held in Sydney in late August
- mentoring young Australian and NZ programmers to put their ideas into practice; and
- encouraging local organisations, including educational institutions, to investigate the technology benefits of cloud computing.

Thousands of small Australian businesses use Google products including Search, AdWords, YouTube, Google Maps and Google Apps - as a core part of their business. This helps them connect with local and overseas customers, stand out in competitive local markets and improve their workplace productivity. We also help local online publishers make money from their content through Google AdSense. These tools grow the web ecosystem and power the digital economy.

In these times, businesses strive for hyper-accountability and adaptability. Marketing through Google AdWords has a low-entry cost and creates a level playing field by giving access to measurable and targeted advertising to businesses of all sizes.

Google has developed great partnerships with many Australian companies, including those in the media and telecommunications sectors, and helps them to utilise a whole range of enterprise and online solutions. Earlier this year we partnered with Fairfax Media to launch an initiative to digitise their archival newspapers and make them freely accessible and searchable online in Google News and Google search results. Australians are able to search and browse historical Fairfax newspapers including The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age exactly as they were first printed, including original images and headlines. This is a great example of how technology and news media can work together to benefit all Australians. There are many categories of Government information including archival information which Google would be delighted to make searchable and readily available if access was provided by Government.

A number of examples of Google applications built on Government information are illustrative of possibilities.

Transit Information on Google Maps

Google Australia is partnering with public transit agencies around Australia to integrate their data with Google Maps. We first launched transit on Google Maps almost exactly one year ago in partnership with TransPerth, to provide public transit directions for the Perth metropolitan area. Then, last December, we partnered with Adelaide Metro to bring the service to Adelaide. In March we announced that Google Transit has launched its third Australian city – now available for the residents of Geraldton, Western Australia.

Victoria Bushfires Map

As the Victorian bushfire disaster of 2009 became apparent, Google Australia pulled together Flash Maps, containing the latest up-to-date information about fire locations and their status as provided from the Country Fire Authority. The Flash Map was updated in real time for the CFA website via an RSS feed. We hoped it would be of some use to people affected, to emergency services, and take some load off other websites which were being inundated. The Flash Map received more than 10 million views from around the world.



A number of the extensive range of third party applications now available in relation to Google Maps provide illustrative examples of applications accessing data and services to add value. Such applications become possible when Government agencies release Government information with open standard APIs and on appropriate licensing terms.

Open content – Google API's ensuring open news for Google maps

Google has created AJAX APIs that allow users to take data and services that Google has provided and transform them for further use. The main goal of our AJAX APIs is to provide developers with the tools needed to create the next generation of innovative web applications. Google Maps API is a leading example of AJAX APIs. We make sure that the terms of the provision of data for Google Maps allows end users to transform the data and use it in new ways.

There are many applications that exemplify what is possible with all of these free building blocks. These include:

- Faneuil Media: Google Maps mash ups are their entire business. They have built high profile maps for NYTimes.com: for examples, see www.faneuilmedia.com.
- Yelp: A popular 'yellow pages' site that uses Google Maps API. Yelp and Google have a symbiotic relationship: they get a lot of their traffic by giving Google Maps an XML feed of their reviews, which we display in our search results next to listings (along with other reviews that we have). See www.yelp.com.
- GMap – Pedometer: This application lets users draw jogging routes, including elevation changes, using Google maps. see www.gmap-pedometer.com.
- New South Wales government Stimulus Snapshots – this map shows infrastructure investments across the State. See <http://more.nsw.gov.au/>

Many other applications become possible as government agencies release raw data on appropriate licensing terms. As an example of the type of data that can be made available on mapping products including Google Maps, Google collaborated with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to make Great Barrier Reef map data and satellite imagery of the islands, reefs, caves and rocks available. You can now [use Google Maps to find and explore](#) the Great Barrier Reef.

Geospatial data held by government agencies could be used to support the development of innovative products and tools by third parties by combination with products like Google Earth to provide information tools about population, climate, pollution, urban development and planning data. For examples of such use of geospatial data, see <http://earth.google.com/gallery/index.html>.

We would be pleased to discuss any of the issues raised in this submission with members of the Taskforce.

Kind regards,

Iarla Flynn
Head of Public Policy and Government Affairs



Annex

Responses to Specific Questions asked in the Taskforce's Issues Paper

Our general comments above address many of the questions asked by the Taskforce in the Issues Paper. We now provide further details and suggestions in response to a number of the questions asked by the Taskforce.

Questions on Principles for Opening Access to Information

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?

Google Response to Question 1:

The arguments for openness, access and transparency apply across the operations of Government.

Of course, in addition to its departments, the Federal Government conducts its operations through a myriad of agencies and authorities. A small number of these are fully commercial business enterprises, or are concerned with national security. The general exceptions that Google suggests to the proposed default cultural and (if considered appropriate) regulatory setting of openness and access could be stated to apply to all departments, authorities and agencies. These exceptions are national security, protection of personal information (privacy), formulation of policy or internal administration, and commercial sensitivity (government created trade secret information or trade secret information of others entrusted in confidence to government and its agencies). These qualifications are equally applicable to all departments, agencies and authorities to the extent that they are not fully commercial business enterprises or engaged in national security activities.

That noted, Google recognises that various Government agencies and authorities operate under a broad range of enabling legislation and constituent documents. It is very difficult to promote and embed cultural change across diverse agencies and authorities and work cultures, and by so doing create the policy of openness that the Federal Government has endorsed.

Some enabling legislation and constituent documents of agencies and authorities may preclude or limit ability to implement open access to appropriate information (that is, information not within the exceptions suggested above). These instruments may need to be amended so as to change default regulatory settings to facilitate and encourage openness and access, to confer appropriate statutory protections upon these authorities and agencies and their office holders and to give an oversight remit to the proposed Information Commissioner, in consultation with other appropriate Government stakeholders.

We recommend that a broad 'most of government approach' is taken that encompasses agencies and authorities initially to the extent that this is reasonably practicable without unduly delaying introduction of the openness and access initiative across 'all of Government' (that is, to all departments, authorities and agencies, except those that are fully commercial business enterprises or engaged in national security activities). The subsequent objective might then be to extend the reach of openness and access to other, less tractable, agencies and authorities of the Australian Government, as soon as reasonably practicable after the initial 'most of Government' implementation. To encourage this broader implementation, the Government CIO or (following establishment) the Information Commissioner might be empowered to publish within the Office's Annual Report a listing as to agencies and authorities that remain outside the ambit of the 'most of Government' openness and access requirement and as to progress in bringing those agencies within these requirements.



Development and Building Applications before Local Councils

There is no doubting the power of the Internet to further disseminate general available publications, such as Government records databases, Court judgements and local council files of council deliberations, including development and building applications. This facilitates active citizenship and empowers the infirm and the elderly to participate in their communities.

Some local government areas in Australia have made developing and building applications and associated approval documents available online. A search by a particular street address on www.google.com.au in relation to a street address within these local government areas will enable a user to view the status of development and building applications in relation to that address. This provides ready availability of information that has always been 'generally available' but usually in a form that is inconvenient to access (for example, by viewing a paper record at Council's Building Department, often open only for limited hours and requiring significant time to access. This service is of great value to members of a community who previously would only have been able to view such records by making a visit to the council – and then only making that visit "on the off-chance" that some step had occurred in the progress of a development application that might be of interest to them.

By way of example, a search on "5 Christina Street Longueville" on www.google.com.au yields search results including a map, StreetView and Lane Cove Council Development Application Information about the property. The information about the property at www.ecouncil.lanecove.nsw.gov.au enables the progress of development and building applications to be tracked. The combination of StreetView and availability of development and building applications property by property and street by street enables neighbours to understand how changes in the streetscape may affect them and prospective purchasers of properties in the vicinity to build an understanding of likely future developments.

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?

Google Response to Question 2:

As noted in our general comments above, we consider that development of appropriate culture of openness and access within Government will be key to success of this Government's openness and access initiatives.

Development of this culture requires a number of things, including:

- education and empowerment of data owners within Government to facilitate broader grants of access;
- appropriate rewards and incentives for Government departments and agencies that implement best practice initiatives that demonstrate openness and access in action and for effective working with third parties that seek to make transformative or other value added users of Government information. Champions should be recognised;
- a driving of initiatives from Ministers down, with central setting (by the proposed Information Commissioner) of whole of government policies and guidelines on openness and access by Government departments, agencies and authorities, and oversight by the proposed Information Commissioner of individual department, authority and agency policies;
- a single 'across Government' index and availability point (such as www.data.gov);
- a uniform system of release and licensing across Government bodies such as a 'Crown Commons;' style permissive licence, to be used except where the Information Commissioner by guideline or individual approval prescribes an alternative, less permissive form of licence, or where enabling legislation for data collection and retention prescribes more restrictive release



terms. Government departments and agencies may need to amend their operating policies to reflect that this environment is more permissive of re-use than general authors' copyright or Crown Copyright;

- model disclaimers as to reliability of information made available;
- if considered necessary, changes to regulatory settings to confer appropriate statutory protections upon Government departments and agencies in relation to disclosure of information, use by service providers of that information and reliance by data and information service users upon Government information. It may be that releases and disclaimers create sufficient protection for Government departments and agencies and their officers: no doubt Government will wish to consider its risk profile and appropriate risk mitigation.

Government officers should also be encouraged and empowered to use social media and blogging, within appropriate guidelines.

British Columbia experiments with social media

In May the City of Vancouver passed a motion to [open its data to the public](#). Inspired by [Washington D.C.'s open data project](#), the city hopes to promote civic engagement, improve decision-making, and deepen accountability. The British Columbia provincial government has an office whose primary mandate is to improve citizen engagement and public deliberation using the collaborative tools on the Web. While other provincial governments have [banned Facebook at work](#), B.C. has recognized the power of social media. See the presentation of David Hume, Executive Director for Citizen Engagement at the B.C. Ministry of Citizen Services, available through <http://googlepublicpolicy.blogspot.com/2009/06/british-columbia-leading-on-open-data.html>.

The UK Cabinet Office Digital Engagement Blog

The Taskforce blog is a great start to digital engagement by Government and its apparent success raises the question: how do we keep up momentum moving forward, including after the Taskforce finishes its deliberations? How should the Australian Government engage with interested citizens and businesses engage with Government in relation to digital initiatives?

The UK Cabinet Office has established a Digital Engagement Team to champion implementation of the recommendations of the Power of Information Taskforce Report. The Team states as "key themes" for its work are:

- **open information** - To have an effective voice, people need to be able to understand what is going on in their public services; government will publish information about public services in ways that are easy to find, use, and re-use.
- **open feedback** - The public should have a fair say about their services. We need more services like NHS Choices or www.publicexperience.com to provide direct feedback to the Innovation Council.
- **open conversation** - We will promote greater engagement through more interactive online consultation and collaboration. We will also empower professionals to be active on online peer-support networks in their area of work.
- **open innovation** - We will promote innovation in online public services to respond to changing expectations – bringing the concepts behind Show Us A Better Way into mainstream government practice.

The Digital Engagement Blog <http://blogs.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digitalengagement/> also hosts guest posts by web 2.0 champions within Government. For example, a 21 July 2009 guest post by Neil Williams, head of corporate digital channels at the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), provides suggested guidelines for use of Twitter by Ministers and departments and links a generic [template Twitter strategy for Departments \(PDF file\)](#) [Scribd [version](#)] which he adapted from BIS's Twitter strategy [Scribd [version](#)]. He states in the post "For the next version of this document I'd like to set down how and when civil servants should support, encourage and manage Ministers'



use of Twitter for Departmental business (and navigate the minefield of propriety this might imply), and add a light touch policy for officials who tweet about their work in a personal capacity.”

Some examples and ideas of specific initiatives to stimulate change in culture within the Australian public service:

Govt 2.0 Awards

Changes in culture may be better effected through public recognition and championship than through regulatory requirement. Google endorses the Taskforce’s announcement that that Government will announce an awards programme to highlight initiatives in opening access to Government information. These awards might extend to also cover excellence and innovation in use of web 2.0 functionality by departments and agencies, and by particular officers of departments and agencies . The awards could be open to all govt bodies at both federal, state, and local level, in order to promote innovation and healthy competition between and within all levels of government in Australia.

The benefits of the Govt 2.0 Awards include:

- enthuising public servants to innovate in adoption and use of web 2.0 functionality and in initiatives to open access to Government information;
- building a cohort of experts of advocates from within government;
- accelerating the process of gathering strong case studies for use across public sector.

Sunlight Labs *APs for America 2 – data.gov Challenge Contest*

Google advocates facilitation of development of third party applications by Government releasing raw data on appropriate licensing terms. Consistent with this advocacy, Google is a sponsor of the *APs for America 2 – data.gov Challenge* coordinated by the Sunlight Foundation to build upon the release of *data.gov*.

The *APs for America 2 – data.gov Challenge* is intended to demonstrate that when Government makes data available, it makes itself more accountable and creates more trust and opportunity in its actions. The contest submissions will showcase the creativity of developers in designing compelling applications that provide easy access and understanding for the public, while also showing how open data can save the Government tens of millions of dollars by engaging the development community in application development at far cheaper rates than traditional Government contractors.

See further www.sunlightlabs.com/contest/apsforamerica2.

A similar initiative to stimulate third party development built upon an *data.gov.au* implementation to open up access to Government information would be likely to stimulate significant interest and innovation within the Australian web 2.0 developer community. The initiative might extend to applications and interfaces that build upon government use of web 2.0 functionality.

Attitudinal survey within the public service

One of the primary focus areas for the Taskforce is to develop proposals for Government as to how to change the culture within the public sector. To make progress on this, Government needs to understand how public servants see adoption and use of web 2.0 functionality and broader access to Government information – both advantages and disadvantages. Google suggest that Government consider commissioning a research survey into the knowledge, attitudes and outlook from public servants on information and communications technology (ICT). Areas to cover might include views on information/data and how it is best managed, understanding of Internet technology and its uses,



personal/business use of ICT, view on where ICT could be deployed better, and views on barriers to deployment.

Mainstreaming Government 2.0

Government 2.0 should form an integral part of core public sector operations. Every Government Department's Annual Report could be required to include information on its progress in adoption and use of web 2.0 functionality and provision of broader access to Government information, and the head of each department should include a progress statement as part of an annual appearance before relevant Parliamentary committees.

Question 3:

What government information would you like to see made more freely available?

Google Response to Question 3:

As noted in our general comments above, the key imperative is to make accessible as broad a range of data and information held by government departments, authorities and agencies as early as possible in the lifecycle of that data and information, in raw form. The arguments for openness, access and transparency apply across the operations of Government.

Government departments, authorities and agencies should make the following information increasingly available on open access basis:

- all published material or material already in the public domain;
- all policies that can be released publicly without unduly interfering with policy formation within Government or internal deliberations of Government as to future policy;
- all information created or collected on a statutory basis subject at all times to national security, commercial sensitivity and privacy considerations;
- all template forms and documents that citizens or businesses may be required to complete at any time; and
- operational information about agencies.

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?

Google Response to Question 4:

Relevant factors that reasonably might restrict access to government information are protection of personal information about individuals (privacy), national security, commercial confidentiality and the need to not impede effective processes for policy formulation within government. We consider that this is likely to be an exhaustive list and could be specified in legislation if broader access to government information was to be mandated in order to support the necessary cultural change within the broad range of government departments and agencies. If this was to be specified in legislation and there was concern as to statement of an exhaustive list, the responsible Minister or (say) the proposed Information Commissioner might be empowered to prescribe additional exemption categories if required.

Consideration will also need to be given to disclaimers, metadata and other notices as to reliance, in order to confer appropriate statutory protections upon Government departments and agencies in relation to disclosure of information that should be disclosed. These might also limit the liability of



Government in relation to use by service providers or users of that information, or reliance by data and information service providers or users of that information. The proposed Information Commissioner could be empowered to publish guidelines in relation to such matters.

Government may be able to learn from the experience of web 2.0 players. Organisations providing web 2.0 services face many of the issues raised by this question. For example, the privacy and security of users and their data is a high priority for Google: trust of users that Google protects their privacy is fundamental to our business. Our overall approach to privacy is based on the principles of transparency and choice.

We have launched a number of products which make use of aggregated search data, in a manner consistent with our Privacy Policy, to provide a useful set of information and analytical tools to users:

- Google Flu Trends - uses aggregated Google search data to estimate flu activity up to two weeks faster than traditional systems. We don't use personal health records or personally identifiable information to create our flu estimates. Only aggregated search queries are used to provide Google Flu Trends. See <http://www.google.org/flutrends/>
- Google Insights For Search (beta) – allows users to compare search volume patterns across specific regions, categories, time frames and properties. See <http://www.google.com/insights/search/#>

We would be happy to provide further information to the Taskforce on how we handle privacy and security issues.

The assessment of risk affecting decisions to make available information should be made centrally within a department or agency by an officer that has a brief to promote openness and access for all information 'owned' by that department or agency, in accordance with policies and guidelines of the Information Commissioner developed in consultation with the Government CIO. Application of these reasons should be transparently to the public as to generic nature of information held in relation to which a relevant consideration against disclosure has been applied and with reasons published for that non-disclosure.

The categories of information available, the terms on which that information is made available, any categories of information that is not made available and the reasons that the categories of information that are not made available are not made available should all be published and readily accessible from each government agency and a central point such as data.gov.au.

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?

There is no specific format in which public sector data should be made available, however government should endeavour to make data and information available in many formats. There are diverse views within industry what characteristics are most useful to users (i.e. feeds (ATOM or RSS) or bulk download (by e.g. FTP); whether it should be an index or a repository, whether it should serve particular types of data (e.g. XML, JSON or RDF) and whether government information needs its own domain or should sit on an existing supersite. See, for example, the diverse comments posted in response to the 22 May 2009 post "Information and how to make it useful" at <http://blogs.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digitalengagement/>, as well as the comments to the thread "Making more government data and information available" on the Taskforce's blog at gov2.net.au.

For information in the form of documents, the subject of open document standards is important for government and users. Open Standards are essential for interoperability and freedom of choice based on the merits of different software applications. They provide freedom from data lock-in and the subsequent vendor lock-in. This makes Open Standards essential for governments organisations



and individual users of information technology. For further information on these issues, see http://www.documentfreedom.org/Main_Page.

Where public sector data/information is already online, the objective generally should be to make it more visible in search engines. It is estimated that 80% of Internet users reach public sector websites through Google and other search engines. However many government websites are structured in a format that is inaccessible to crawling. The most significant barrier is dynamic databases. This means that the information is invisible to users of search engines.

Google has developed the Sitemap Protocol (see <http://www.sitemaps.org/>), which provides governments with an optional avenue for making non-confidential information more available to search engines like Google. This in turn makes Government websites and non-confidential information easier for the public to find. The Sitemap Protocol works by allowing information stored on a website, including in a database application, to be indexed by a search engine. It is an open technical standard developed by Google and widely supported in the search engine industry. It provides a mechanism for producing a list or map of all the webpages on a website and automatically communicating this 'sitemap' to search engines. These Sitemaps provide a comprehensive list of pages on a website for search engine crawlers, not simply a directory to help a user navigate a website. See the example of Arizona's Govt Information Technology Agency earlier in this document for a relevant case study.

How might the licensing of on-line information be improved to facilitate greater re-use where appropriate?

Google advocates a uniform system of release and licensing across Government bodies, such as a 'Crown Commons;' style permissive licence, to be used except where the Information Commissioner by guideline or individual approval prescribes an alternative, less permissive form of licence, or where enabling legislation for data collection and retention prescribes more restrictive release terms.

Government departments and agencies may need to amend their operating policies to reflect that this environment is more permissive of re-use than general authors copyright or Crown Copyright.

New Zealand Government Open Access Information and Data Reuse Program

The New Zealand State Services Commission noted a perception that New Zealand Government departments and agencies had not released many useful data sets, databases and other information resources. As an interim step, the Commission has made available a list of data sets, databases and other information resources that are already available online, usually on the websites of source agencies, in various forms including structured, machine readable feeds. This information was released as proof of concept and on an ongoing beta basis.

The Commission noted that the work is a precursor to a formal release later this year of a New Zealand Government Open Access and Information Licensing Framework which will provide guidance for agencies and the public on the use of the Creative Commons suite of New Zealand law licences across New Zealand Government departments and agencies. See www.e.govt.nz/policy/information-data/opening-up.html.

An advocacy group (Open New Zealand, at www.open.org.nz) has formed to develop and host projects around transparency, participatory democracy and making central New Zealand and local government information useful to citizens and business: Open New Zealand is conducting the *NZ Open Government Data Barcamp and Hackfest* on 29 August 2009 to brainstorm ways in which Government information may be made more accessible and available to New Zealand citizens: see <http://groups.google.com/group/nzopengovtbarcamp/web>. The State Services Commission is actively blogging in support of this initiative (see <http://blog.e.govt.nz/index.php/2009/07/31/nz-open-govt-data-barcamphackfest/>) and will have five officers attending.



Licensing Government Information UK Style

The [Power of Information Taskforce Report](#) of February 2009 recommended that UK Government departments and agencies should ensure that there is a uniform system of release and licensing applied across all public bodies: that is, individual public bodies should not develop or vary the standard terms for their sector. The system should create a “Crown commons” style approach, using a highly permissive licensing scheme that is transparent, easy to understand and easy to use, modelled on the “click use” licence, subject to limited caveats. It also recommended that “public information should be available at marginal cost, which in practice means for free online. Exceptions to this rule should pass stringent tests to ensure that the national benefit is actually served by charging for information and thus limiting its reuse”: see Recommendation 10 of the Report, as available at <http://poit.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/poit/>.

The UK Government has now moved to implement recommendations of this Taskforce: see <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/advice/psi-regulations/uk-report-reuse-psi-2009.pdf>. In particular, the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) is developing a new licence model, building on the success of the Click-Use Licence. The new licence will not require users to register and apply, and will offer a higher degree of interoperability with other licences such as Creative Commons and GNU Open Document Licence. Details of the licence terms and conditions are available on the OPSI website <http://digitalbritainforum.org.uk/report/the-journey-to-digital-government/deriving-maximum-value-from-public-anonymous-data/>.

The UK Home Office has also published a page that collates all non-personal information of that Office, on www.homeoffice.gov.uk/data, in accordance with [Recommendation 14](#) of the [Power of Information Taskforce Report](#).

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?

Google Response to Question 6:

See our discussion of the ‘cathedral’ and the bazaar’ earlier in this document : we consider that the first objective is creation of open access to further categories of government information, including navigability to that information, rather than a slower, broader and more expensive standardised ‘big bang’ data repository. A consolidated directory would assist many users but should not be a substitute for navigability of the underlying data.

We also advocate a central Digital Engagement Homepage and Blog for Government, highlighting key initiatives, Government policies and policy templates for departments and agencies, and provides a forum for open discussion points.

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?

Question 8:

What approaches should the Government use to allow information to be easily shared?

Google Response to Questions 7 and 8:



See our response to Question 5 for our views of how to make government data more easily available

Google submits that Government should generally not see its role as to develop consumer interfaces or presentation formats or other solutions that provide a 'retail' experience where Government considers that the commercial (non-Government) market might reasonably be expected to develop a variety of modes of access to and presentation of raw Government data.

We agree that governments should mandate that information be only kept and stored in open and publicly documented standards. We do not anticipate increases in cost or reduced flexibility arising from such an approach. Open document standards are well established and widely available and could provide a greater flexibility to government and users, with the potential to reduce costs.

A prominent example is the Open Document Format (ODF), which is an [XML-based file format](#) for representing electronic documents such as [spreadsheets](#), [charts](#), [presentations](#) and [word processing](#) documents. The OpenDocument format is used in [free software](#) and in [proprietary software](#) and is supported by many prominent software vendors including Adobe, IBM and Google. In many cases versions of the Open Document Format are available for free download and use. For further information on ODF see <http://www.odfalliance.org/>

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?

Open standards and open source facilitate diversity of applications and by so doing stimulate innovation. Functional duplication in applications will sometimes be desirable to test different approaches, analytics and presentation formats.

Wasteful duplication is best avoided through prompt and broad dissemination within government and the third party developer community of initiatives under development within Government, such as through a central discussion point such as a Digital Engagement Blog, cross departmental user groups and forums.

Web 2.0 tools can play a significant role in enabling this collaboration and communication. For example, the Google Apps suite of 'cloud' based tools¹⁰ provides users with email, integrated instant messaging, shared calendars, & real-time collaboration on documents - all within a standard web browser interface.

Question 11:

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

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?

Question 13:

How does government manage the costs and risks of publication of inaccurate information?

Google Response to Questions 11, 12 and 13:

¹⁰ (see <http://www.google.com/enterprise/government/index.html>)



The proposed Information Commissioner, in consultation with AGIMO and a user group of agency stakeholders, could perform a useful role in setting guidelines and standards as to information and records management policies and best practice, including in relation to use of social networking and other interaction tools of interactive citizen engagement.

As the Taskforce itself notes, agencies frequently cite concerns about the integrity of their information as a reason for their reluctance to release it. Google submits that except in unusual cases the release of information with appropriate disclaimers as to quality will be better than not releasing it at all. The disclaimers may be as to the level of vetting or verification of the information or as to sampling techniques or other relevant factors that affect the reliability of the information. Where appropriate multiple data sets can be made available with differing levels of marking as to quality and vetting and different disclaimers as to reliability.

One option for government is adopt a practice similar to that commonly used in the ICT industry where new products (generally software) are issued in stages according to their stage of development:

- Alpha - The alpha build of software is provided to people beyond the core developers of the [software - sometimes issued to the public](#), but more usually it is provided to a wider set of internal users who test the software's functionality
- Beta – is the prototype of the software that is released to the public. Beta testing allows the software to undergo [usability testing](#) with users who provide [feedback](#), so that any malfunctions can be reported to the [developers](#) and fixed.

The use of disclaimers and non-reliance statements should ideally be relatively uniform across government departments and agencies in relation to comparable data sets and other information. The proposed Information Commissioner could perform a useful role in setting guidelines and standards as to disclosure.

Government will no doubt wish to assess its risk exposure and consider whether statutory risk mitigation is required. Google's preliminary view is that a general statutory exculpation of Government from responsibility or liability in relation to publicly available Government information is not necessary or desirable, given Government's ability to address and mitigate risks through use of appropriate and relatively standardised disclosure and disclaimers. However, we also recognise that Government officers are concerned to manage and reduce risk, and if creation of a culture of open access to government information requires consideration by Government of further statutory exculpation of Government from responsibility or liability in relation to publicly available Government information, we commend further consideration of this by Government's legal advisers.

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'?)

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?

Google Response to Questions 14 and 15:

The key imperative is to make accessible as broad a range of data and information held by government departments, authorities and agencies as early as possible in the lifecycle of that data and information, in raw form. Where quality is compromised by early release the information can be



'beta' marked or otherwise labelled to indicate limitations as to quality or vetting and accompanied by an appropriate disclaimer as to reliability.

Question 16:

What can we do to better promote and co-ordinate initiatives in this area? How can we draw key departments together?

Google Response to Question 16:

See principally our response to Question 2 above and also our response to Question 9.

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?

Google Response to Question 17:

See principally our responses to Questions 5 and 6 above.

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?

Google Response to Question 18:

In general Government information should be made available without charge. Cost-based pricing to recover the cost of dissemination may be appropriate where it is both feasible and cost-effective to levy such a charge, or where information has been produced for a commercial purpose of sale at a profit. Where information has been produced by a Government department or agency for sale at a profit, the department or agency should also ensure that the raw data that has been used to produce that information is made available to enable others to process and analyse that data, unless a good reason for not doing so has been published by the government data 'owner' (under the oversight of an 'independent eye' within Government, such as the Information Commissioner or the Government CIO).

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?

Google Response to Question 19:

Google does not advocate public private partnerships by way of for shared profit commercial partnerships or joint ventures as a means to increase access to public sector information. This is because Google submits that Government should generally not develop complex or expensive



consumer interfaces or presentation formats or other solutions that provide a 'retail' experience where Government where the commercial (non-Government) market might reasonably be expected to develop a variety of modes of access to and presentation of raw Government data. Government should not need to expend capital of the magnitude requiring public private partnerships in order to make available many Web 2.0 applications or to provide access to raw or unanalysed data or to open APIs on top of that data for developers and outside organisations to use.

Government should of course engage with the third party developer community to stimulate Web 2.0 applications and to provide develop retail and other applications built on government information. This engagement will generally not require commitment of substantial expenditure by Government.

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?

Google Response to Question 20:

See the international examples given throughout this submission.

Question 21:

How can best practice be facilitated, identified, rewarded, and further propagated?

Google Response to Question 21:

See our response to Question 2 above.



Questions on Maximising the Potential of Government 2.0

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?

We do not offer a response to Question 22

Question 23:

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

Google Response to Question 23:

Government can:

- encourage public input wherever and whenever practicable;
- facilitate search on all information and request for citizen participation, noting again that research suggest that 4 out of 5 interactions of citizens with government are initiated by search;
- empower users to make informed comment making available and easily accessible, linking or otherwise conveniently referencing the key data inputs to informed comment;
- endeavour to use generally available and understood collaboration tools and paradigms wherever possible;
- facilitate anonymity of citizens in posting of comments and other interactions with Government;
- use simple language;
- use video and other formats (see by way of example the Privacy videos at <http://www.google.com/privacy.html>);
- market Government's invitation to citizens to participate; and
- make it easy for citizens to participate and respond in multiple formats and media (including aural, visual and audiovisual, not just written).
-

The Long Tail of Public Policy

Social media expert [David Eaves](#) has been one of the key proponents and advisers behind Vancouver's open data initiative, which we referred to earlier. He has developed a fascinating theory of the "long tail of public policy." He highlights the untapped expertise outside of government and typical contributors to public policy debates, such as think tanks -- from you, me, your family, and your neighbours. This knowledge -- the long tail -- on any given public policy issue is greater than the collective knowledge within government. Policymakers therefore need to learn how to tap this know-how in order to make better decisions. David's blog is at <http://eaves.ca/> and his presentation is available at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/16929162/eaves>

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?

Google Response to Question 24:

Collaboration tools should be accompanied by appropriate privacy notices, in simple language and accessible formats, to address any concerns of individual users. In general Government should



facilitate anonymity of citizens in posting of comments and other interactions with Government, except of course where verification of identity is reasonably required for Government to provide a reliable response. Giving users/contributors the ability to comment or remarks by other users can help to generate a dynamic and to protect the environment for all users

Government can draw on the expertise of web 2.0 players who have already developed social media and community-centred services in shaping its own approach. As an example, YouTube provides users with a range of privacy tools which are set out in simple language in the YouTube Privacy centre¹¹ and are supplemented by a range of easy-to-understand videos on Google's own Privacy Channel on YouTube¹². YouTube users can "flag" a concern against any video or comment made on YouTube (for privacy or other reasons) and material breaching privacy guidelines will be removed.

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?

Google Response to Question 25:

See our responses to Questions 23 and 24 above.

:

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?

Google Response to Questions 25 and 26:

Government should endeavour to use generally available and understood collaboration tools and paradigms wherever possible to facilitate easy take-up and use of engagement options by citizens. As noted already, in general Government should facilitate anonymity of citizens in posting of comments and other interactions with Government.

Question 27:

How can public servants comply with the APS values and other protocols whilst still participating in online engagement? Should existing rules including legislation be changed and/or adapted to facilitate greater online engagement?

See our response to Question 2 above

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?

Google Response to Question 28:

It is customary for sites to include appropriate notices as to the level of moderation or other review of third party content such as uploaded postings to a blogger site. Many sites by their nature or due to volume of content or other resource constraints cannot be continuously monitored by their sponsors.

¹¹ See <http://www.youtube.com/t/privacy>

¹² see <http://www.youtube.com/user/googleprivacy>



Appropriate community rules, notices as to inappropriate content and methods for notification of content considered by other users to be inappropriate can facilitate prompt identification of contentious content and a decision to take-down or not. Government could use independent or citizen moderators: moderation or consideration of take-down requests need not be done by public officials.

This is of course not a unique problem for government: many corporations including Google (in particular in relation to Google's Blogger and YouTube products) have extensive experience in managing user generated content and social networking and collaboration sites. Our Blogger and YouTube products provide users with community guidelines which set out clear and common sense rules for maintaining the integrity and trust that is vital for a vibrant online community. We provide users with the ability to "flag" content that they find offensive (for a variety of reasons) and material breaching community policies will be removed. Government can draw on the experience of these existing players in developing appropriate community rules, policies, moderator guidelines and take-down procedures.

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?

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?

Google Response to Questions 29 and 30:

See our response to Question 2 above.

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?

Google Response to Question 31:

See our examples of collaboration and consultation given in boxed text throughout this submission above.

Question 32:

For profit firms often use the rich data they harvest from their existing information assets and their ongoing presence on the web to guide their own innovation, measuring consumer reactions to many small scale experiments and optimising operations, for instance the design of a website, in response to this feedback. To what extent can we promote such an approach in the public sector and are there any examples of emerging practice?

Government can already use tools made available by existing players to better analyse trends on the wider Internet as well as user activity (generally in aggregate form) on their own websites. As an example, two relevant and freely available tools from Google are:

- Google Analytics – a web analytics solution that gives rich insights into website traffic and user interaction with an individual website. Further information is at <http://www.google.com/analytics/>



- Google Insights For Search (beta) – allows users to compare search volume patterns across specific regions, categories, time frames and properties. See <http://www.google.com/insights/search/#>

Question 33:

It is a cliché that public sector managers – and possibly the Ministers to whom they report -- are risk averse. But often they are not so much risk averse as innovation averse. That is, there is a high 'burden of proof' against doing something differently even where it involves relatively low risks. Sometimes this is because it is simply more comfortable to do things the way they've always been done. In other circumstances, some argue that specific professions can be set in their ways. There may be some wisdom in this given the complexity of existing systems and the possibility of unanticipated consequences, particularly where these consequences may be political. These decisions are often heavily influenced by experts. How can such expertise be governed so as not to unduly stifle innovation?

See our response to Question 2 above in relation to the need for cultural change within government

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?

See our responses to Questions 1, 4, 13, and 24 above

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?

See our response to Question 1 above and in the summary section

ENDS