



Australian Government
**Australian Customs and
Border Protection Service**

Dr Nicholas Gruen
Government 2.0 Taskforce Chair
submissions@gov2.net.au

24 August 2009

Dear Dr Gruen,

Customs and Border Protection Service response to *Towards Government 2.0: An Issues Paper*

The Australian Customs and Border Protection Service is pleased to provide the following submission concerning the Government 2.0 Taskforce's *Towards Government 2.0: An Issues Paper*.

Scope of Government 2.0 Taskforce

Question 1 in the issues paper contains the ambiguous use of the term 'Government Departments' (p12). It is unclear whether this means Commonwealth Agencies and Departments or merely Departments. The context would suggest that the intended meaning is both Government Departments and Agencies.

Security Issues

Customs and Border Protection is a National Security Agency

Customs and Border Protection will need to reconcile the whole of government push towards openness and disclosure entailed in Govt 2.0 against existing security and privacy requirements. It is encouraging to note that the current issues paper acknowledges that "privacy, national security and confidentiality issues will properly prevent the release of some information, but this should not inhibit the release of other non-sensitive government information". Question 34 of the issues paper directly addresses this matter:

"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?"

In response, it would appear that much of the information that Customs and Border Protection holds would not be suitable for release to the public.

Staff access to Web 2.0 Applications

Customs and Border Protection currently restricts access for its staff to popular Web 2.0 sites and applications associated with the Govt 2.0 approach such as Facebook, Twitter etc. A primary rationale for this policy are the security issues that are associated with the use of these applications.

Record Keeping Impact of Government 2.0 approach

Any possible move towards Web 2.0 style interaction with the public and within the agency itself would impact on record keeping practices within the agency in situations where the interaction would require a record to be made. The challenges of converting online information from Web 2.0 applications into official records would have to be addressed by the agency. This issue is not specifically referred to in the issues paper and the taskforce may want to address the issue.

Education of staff on correct classification of information

The issues paper does not appear to consider the need to provide increased training to Commonwealth agency staff in the appropriate classification of documents and information. Overclassification of documents is one of the key obstacles to the implementation of any Government 2.0 approach.

Open Standards and International Activities (Qs 7 & 20)

The paper promotes the increased use of open and non-proprietary standards for both applications and data such as XML, CSV, ODF, RDF or RDFa. Any possible mandate for information to be kept and stored in open and publicly documented standards would have to be mindful of existing agency obligations towards existing standards. For example, in Customs and Border Protection's case, the agency has already broadly agreed to use World Customs Organisation standards where appropriate.

Information Quality

The publishing of potentially incorrect or incomplete information is of particular concern to a regulatory agency such as Customs and Border Protection. Even though blogs and similar are traditionally seen as informal means of communication, the information presented within could be seen as being legally binding. Adequate risk management concerning moderation of agency blogs and similar would need to be addressed in more detail.

Agency Context

Customs and Border Protection is primarily a regulatory agency and not a policy agency seeking the input of the public into the formulation of new policy. Much of the focus of the Government 2.0 approach relates to agencies with a policy development focus.

Yours sincerely

Joe Attanasio
Chief Information Officer
Australian Customs and Border Protection Service