Submission to Inquiry into Joined Up Government.

By

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In my view, some of the issues that have prevented adequate integration of Government services to benefit the public are as follows.

1. Structural Problems:

Budgeting arrangements are designed to maintain 'silo' approaches in Government. While accountability for budget management remains under the control of single Departments, the incentives will always be to maintain control within that Department of where and how monies are expended. A possible alternative is the 'programme' approach - where major social issues are tackled in a cross-sectoral way. There are already celebrated examples of this e.g. various taskforces (Graffiti, Physical Fitness, Gordon Enquiry implementation). The problem has been that these taskforces become like mini-Departments and lose their connection to (and their influence within) the agencies from which they have been drawn.

Portfolios/Adversarial nature of Cabinet:
The way Ministerial portfolios are allocated encourages intra-Cabinet competition. Ministers are judged on the performance of their agencies – not on how well their agencies integrate their services with the Departments from other portfolio areas. Indeed, this can extend to blame shifting when a cross cutting issue arises.

Incentives to perform as a Department – this 'competitive' arrangement is communicated to CEO's who have strong incentives to keep their Minister's 'happy' and achieving 'good press' when sometimes a more collaborative approach would have delivered better services to the public.

2. Cultural:

Knowledge not shared: There are clear incentives in the public sector (as in most organizational life) to hang onto information and not to share it. Organizational culture promotes the 'knowledge is power' approach. A broad attempt to turn this around and provide incentives to those who collaborate is desperately needed. Seeking out,

rewarding and using good practices case studies of collaboration to educate across the sector would also be beneficial.

Policy developed in isolation: Departments often come from different philosophical stand points because they make policy in isolation from each other. In the UK an attempt was made to address this by setting up searchable, shared data bases of Government policies. As new policy was being developed (or old policies revamped), agencies could then log into this data base and bring up related policy information and personnel who might contribute to ensuring that policies (plus values and vision) remained consistent across Government. Currently, consistency is entirely dependent on legal frameworks and human networks – a net through which much can slip. As the project co-ordinator for the development of the Integrated Workforce Management Framework for the Western Australia Public Sector (See:
http://www.dpc.wa.gov.au/psmd/pubs/wac/framework/framework2.pdf)
I believe I am qualified to comment on this. In this framework, I had to work very hard to be sure it took account of all the existing, articulated and non-articulated policies of Government at the time.

One of the values that remains problematic for public servants is exactly <u>who</u> is the customer? Clearly, public servants must serve the Government of the day, both by law and in the moral sense. This can sometimes impede integrated service to the public – see incentives to perform as a Department above.

3. Technical:

Sharing of data has been difficult: Integrated government does require sharing of information and while this is now technically very possible, there has not been great appetite to use the information technology at our disposal to do so. For example – the ability for members of the public to update information (addresses etc) for billing/licensing etc across the sector at a one stop shop as I understand it remains impossible.

4. Legal

Sharing of Information between Government Departments is sometimes prohibited for good reason (e.g. police information). There remains on going ethical debates as to whether the public is advantaged or disadvantaged by this. It is an area that should be constantly scrutinized and updated in keeping with changing societal values.

Conclusion:

In its report to Cabinet in 2002, the Machinery of Government (MOG) Taskforce addressed the issue of "*collaborative approaches across government with particular reference to community services*". Indeed this was the basis on which former separate Departments were merged – in an effort to bring together areas of 'policy similarity'. Six months into these substantial re-structures I headed some research into the efficacy of the

restructure to date and undertook some in depth research into one of the portfolio areas. This research identified a number of the barriers that were preventing synergy between the former separate Departments. The research culminated in a summary report to the MOG Implementation Committee. Many of the points made in this summary report would be pertinent to this enquiry – and supported many of the points made above. This report remains filed in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

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