

PRODUCTIVITY: WHAT IS AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S BURNING PLATFORM TO DRIVE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION?

RESEARCH INNOVATION COUNCIL ANZ BRIEF | VOL.2 | ANU TECH POLICY DESIGN CENTRE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



On 17 October, 2024, the Research Innovation Council convened a pivotal roundtable in Canberra to explore strategies for modernising public sector services. The discussion brought together a cross-sector coalition of government officials, technologists, and academic leaders, focusing on the GX5 framework—a five-pillar strategy aimed at driving digital transformation and fostering citizen-centric service delivery.

Attending the discussion were 11 senior Australian Public Service leaders, representing a diverse array of agencies and departments. Of these attendees, **64% held Senior Executive Service and C-level roles**, such as Deputy Secretary, Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Chief Data Officer (CDO), while the remaining 36% comprised Executive Level team members and Directors overseeing key portfolios in digital business, data analytics, ICT, and systems.

This forum facilitated sector-wide collaboration, incorporating insights from **AWS** and 4 industry partners comprising **Okta, GWI Digital, Shine Solutions, and HashiCorp**, synergised with 2 senior academic contributors, curated by **ANU Tech Policy Design Centre**.

Key roadblocks identified during the discussion included cultural resistance within agencies, legislative constraints, and risk aversion toward large-scale digital initiatives. Participants proposed actionable steps to address these challenges, such as enhancing cross-agency collaboration, streamlining procurement processes, and leveraging incremental innovation to build momentum.

The discussion underscored the transformative potential of digital initiatives to bolster public trust, reduce operational costs, and address pressing challenges related to workforce capacity and service delivery. By fostering collaboration among government, industry, and academia, this roundtable laid the groundwork for accelerating Australia's digital transformation journey.

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WHAT IS THE GX5?



FIVE DIGITAL INITIATIVES
TO BOOST PRODUCTIVITY

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KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

FROM GOVERNMENT 2.0 TO 3.0

The transition from Government 2.0 to Government 3.0 remains a challenging but essential priority. While the shift to citizen-centric services is critical, participants noted that practical obstacles—including inter-agency silos, risk aversion, and outdated systems—hinder progress. The GX5 framework was introduced as a model to unify services under a citizen-centric digital ecosystem, representing a shift from fragmented, agency-specific services to a cohesive, responsive structure.

Guest speaker, the Hon. Victor Dominello, Chair of the Federal Ministerial Advisory Committee on Digital ID, Former Minister and Co-Founder of [ServiceGen](#), highlighted how New South Wales's (NSW) success in digital transformation could serve as a blueprint for broader adoption.

The discussion emphasised that digital identity is foundational, with the potential to streamline user experience and foster public trust by reducing bureaucratic redundancies. Participants recognised that the citizen-centric focus of GX5 requires a parallel shift in legislative support, funding models, and agency culture to overcome bureaucratic inertia and build resilience.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS: THE GX5

Collectively, the GX5 initiatives represent a transformation in public service delivery, moving towards efficiency, privacy, and responsiveness. However, participants acknowledged that to realise these goals, significant collaboration across agencies, clear funding structures, and updated legislative frameworks are needed.

The Research and Analysis behind the GX5 comes courtesy of [Ember Advisors](#), and more information on the methodology is available via our corresponding PSN Insight [here](#).

5 DIGITAL INITIATIVES TO BOOST PRODUCTIVITY

Participants explored several groundbreaking ideas central to the GX5 framework:

Digital Identity: This concept was highlighted as a way to centralise identity management while preserving privacy through a federated architecture. By allowing citizens control over personal data, Digital Identity aligns with a “privacy by design” model, offering a unified login for accessing various government services without the need for repeated verifications.

Digital Skills Wallet: A lifelong digital repository, would enable citizens to track their educational and professional achievements. This could significantly reduce the administrative burden on agencies and expedite processes such as license verifications for professionals, particularly in sectors like healthcare and education.

Digital Front Door: A single entry point for citizens, streamlining access to a range of services. By consolidating services into a single interface, the initiative would ease navigation, eliminate duplication, and support seamless interaction across agency platforms.

Digital Health Record: Participants envisioned the Health Record as a repository for citizens' health records, connecting them to healthcare providers across regions. Such a system would allow authorised providers to access patient information on demand, improving the quality of healthcare and supporting personalised care.

Digital Licences & Permits: A Digital Credentialing system would replace paper-based credentials with secure digital formats, making it easier for citizens to present verified information in a consistent manner. The portability of digital credentials could enhance workforce mobility, simplifying job and service access for those with verified skills and qualifications.

CHALLENGES AND INHIBITORS

Despite the potential benefits of GX5, several persistent challenges were identified:

CULTURAL RESISTANCE AND RISK AVERSION

A significant barrier to digital transformation in government remains cultural resistance, particularly around risk. Government agencies often display conservative risk thresholds, limiting the potential for innovation. The roundtable discussed that to foster a supportive culture for digital initiatives, leadership must embrace incremental change through low-risk pilots and R&D approaches.

INTER-AGENCY SILOES AND LEGISLATIVE BARRIERS

Cross-agency collaboration is critical, but legal and regulatory constraints impede unified data-sharing. For instance, participants noted that inconsistencies in agency regulations could prevent the adoption of a singular digital identity system, complicating the user experience.

FUNDING CONSTRAINTS

The group highlighted that digital transformation initiatives face substantial challenges in securing long-term funding due to business process change. Demonstrating ROI and aligning digital projects with productivity outcomes are necessary to gain Treasury support. However, this often requires framing digital transformation as essential to national economic resilience and service efficiency.

CITIZEN TRUST

Establishing trust in new digital platforms is essential. Participants noted that building confidence in digital identity systems and centralised service platforms is necessary to ensure equitable access and widespread adoption of digital services.

STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

To address these challenges, the session emphasised the need for collaborative frameworks to establish digital identities and front-door systems across state and federal agencies. Such a framework would provide a cohesive structure for citizens, ensuring streamlined access and a more user-friendly experience. Key strategies identified include:

INCREMENTAL PILOTS

Participants recommended starting with smaller-scale pilot projects to build momentum and demonstrate initial success. This approach would mitigate risks and provide valuable data on adoption and user satisfaction.

DATA-SHARING PROTOCOLS

Establishing clear data-sharing guidelines across departments was seen as essential for unified service delivery. NSW's model of a structured, ethics-first data-sharing framework was proposed as an example to follow, balancing transparency, privacy, and inter-agency trust.

FINANCIAL FRAMING FOR TREASURY APPROVAL

Digital initiatives should be positioned as productivity and resilience investments. By highlighting cost savings and efficiency gains, departments can increase the likelihood of securing funding, thereby addressing the challenge of long-term financial sustainability.



CASE STUDIES

SINGAPORE'S NATIONAL DIGITAL IDENTITY SYSTEM

Singapore's Singpass system was highlighted as a successful model of high adoption and seamless integration of digital services across both public and private sectors. With over 97% uptake, Singpass allows citizens to access a range of services securely, with an average of 80 transactions per user annually across thousands of participating entities.

INDIA'S DIGITAL IDENTITY INITIATIVE – AADHAAR

India's Aadhaar initiative was noted as an ambitious and transformative project that enabled India to streamline identity verification for millions of citizens. By linking Aadhaar with services across sectors, including banking and government welfare programs, India has significantly improved accessibility and reduced administrative burdens. However, the case also served as a cautionary example on the importance of privacy safeguards, an aspect Australia aims to integrate robustly into its digital identity plans to avoid potential misuse of personal information.

UKRAINE'S DIGITAL SERVICES PLATFORM – DIIA

Diia was presented as an innovative example of a comprehensive digital platform providing government services, even under challenging conditions such as the ongoing conflict. Ukraine has achieved approximately 70% adoption for Diia, allowing citizens to complete a wide range of administrative tasks digitally, from renewing passports to accessing tax information. The platform's design is highly user-centric, prioritising simplicity and accessibility.

THE BURNING PLATFORM

A critical part of driving digital transformation is establishing a compelling "burning platform"—a sense of urgency that underlines the necessity of change. In nations like Estonia and Ukraine, digital transformation was accelerated by clear imperatives: resource scarcity and external threats, which fostered rapid adoption and unified commitment. However, in Western contexts where such immediate drivers are less prominent, defining a must-have rationale becomes more complex but equally essential.

One approach to framing this urgency is to position digital transformation as a resilience and economic imperative. Rather than waiting for crisis-driven adoption, government agencies can proactively communicate how current fragmented systems create hidden costs and operational inefficiencies that threaten long-term fiscal sustainability and service quality. By showcasing these "slow-burn" consequences, agencies can frame the digital shift as necessary to prevent productivity loss, ensure future-readiness, and build resilience against global economic volatility or potential cybersecurity threats.

Additionally, government could present digital transformation as a means to address citizen dissatisfaction with fragmented services. With consumer-grade experiences increasingly expected in public services, the drive towards integrated, seamless digital services becomes a response to a "quiet crisis" in citizen engagement and trust in government. By illustrating how inaction may lead to a widening gap between public expectations and service delivery, governments can rally both internal and public support for transformation as a critical investment in future service viability and citizen satisfaction.

ACTIONABLE OUTCOMES

LAUNCH PILOT PROJECTS

Agencies are encouraged to begin by identifying high impact digital initiatives with the opportunity for pilot projects to start small and test scalability. Such pilots could provide critical insights into the adoption potential and operational efficiency of the GX5 and beyond.

FORM OPERATIONAL WORKING GROUPS

Despite the progress achieved through existing whole-of-government committees, for example the Secretaries Digital and Data Committee, in order to be able to get deeper cross-government investment in IT and digital design, a specific CIO-type group could spark an ecosystem improvement at the level of communicating and coordinating the shared planning of core and common investments, capabilities, and technologies.

BUILD CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Developing partnerships with private sector firms, particularly in tech, was suggested to access external expertise and de-risk large-scale transformations due to broader industry access to use cases, analytics and expertise.

INVESTING IN WORKFORCE RESKILLING

Participants are encouraged to existing tools available to the APS. For example, the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) has renewed its whole-of-country licence for the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA), a common language that supports technical skills development, career planning, and workforce management.

Introducing new skills in disciplines such as data, finance, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity, the APSC utilizes SFIA to upskill public sector employees through tools like the APS Career Pathfinder, which assists individuals in exploring digital and other career options within the government.

ENGAGING AI ASSURANCE

To support the sector's effective engagement with the DTA's AI Assurance Framework Pilot, the following recommendations guide how agencies can prepare for this new framework:

CONDUCT READINESS ASSESSMENTS

Agencies can perform internal audits or readiness assessments of current AI and data-driven initiatives to identify gaps relative to the framework's principles.

INTEGRATE FRAMEWORK REQUIREMENTS INTO AGENCY AI STRATEGIES

Proactive assessment of the framework's core principles is the key to prepare relevant compliance and ethical considerations early enough to embed critical standards within emerging AI strategies and project plans.

DEVELOP AI GOVERNANCE PRACTICES

Establishing robust internal governance structures to oversee AI projects will be essential. Agencies should designate a governance body or roles responsible for ensuring AI initiatives meet the framework's ethical, security, and transparency standards.

ENGAGE IN CONSULTATIONS AND CROSS-AGENCY KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Contributing perspectives and operational insights can refine the framework to better fit on-the-ground realities, enhancing its utility across the sector. Additional cross-agency dialogue can also enhance sector-wide consistency and foster shared solutions.



CONCLUSION

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The GX5 framework presents a clear path towards a citizen-centred digital government, yet success will require a shift in agency culture, risk tolerance, and an improved collaborative approach. Emphasising productivity gains and economic resilience can help align Treasury support, while pilot programs will enable agencies to build momentum and refine their approach.

NEXT STEPS

Participants agreed to explore collaboration with relevant agencies to pursue GX5-related pilots. Data-sharing protocols should be prioritised, and further discussions with Treasury will aim to position digital initiatives as essential for national productivity and resilience. The pertinence of AI readiness rounded out action plans, inspiring leaders with the possibilities of agentic government.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSIONS

The roundtable recommended future sessions on topics such as AI governance, predictive digital transformation, and climate resilience. These areas of focus will ensure that digital transformation strategies not only address current needs but also prepare the public sector for future challenges.



ABOUT PUBLIC SECTOR NETWORK

Public Sector Network is a research company that represents public sector professionals across Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the USA. It develops roundtables, seminars, and conferences to suit current areas of interest to government agencies and their suppliers.

PSN's growing community spans across federal, state, and local government departments, healthcare, and education, allowing members to share information, access the latest in government innovation, and engage with other like-minded individuals on a secure and closed-door network.

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