

# DIGITAL COHESION: WHAT IS VICTORIA'S IMPERATIVE FOR BOLD LEADERSHIP AND CROSS- AGENCY COLLABORATION?

RESEARCH INNOVATION COUNCIL ANZ BRIEF | VOL.3

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



On 18 October, 2024, **RMIT University** hosted a pivotal roundtable on digital transformation, convening senior public sector leaders, academic experts, and private sector innovators in Melbourne. Against the backdrop of the national GX5 framework, the discussion spotlighted Victoria's unique challenges and opportunities in modernising government service delivery.

Key themes included overcoming entrenched silos, harnessing leadership for cross-agency collaboration, and leveraging regional innovation to accelerate transformation. The discussion underscored the urgency of digital progress to ensure public trust, enhance inclusivity, and bolster productivity.

Attending the session were 12 senior public sector leaders from Victoria, with **58% representing Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and C-level roles**, including Chief Procurement Officers (CPO), Chief Information Officer (CIO), and Chief Data & Analytics Officers (CDAO). The remaining 42% seniority comprised Directors, including of Strategy, Customer Experience, Analytics, and Strategic Programs. To support capability and skills building, this forum featured 5 industry partners (**AWS, Freshworks, GWI Digital, Okta, and Shine Solutions**) plus 4 senior academic contributors curated by **RMIT University**.

These leaders oversee a diverse array of functions, including digital integration services, analytics, customer experience, strategic program management, and digital transformation. Collectively, they drive critical initiatives in data-driven decision-making, technology innovation, accessibility, and customer-centric service delivery, reflecting a strong focus on modernising and streamlining Victoria's public sector operations.

With the GX5 framework referenced as a foundational guideline, this roundtable uniquely explored regional challenges and opportunities, offering actionable strategies to translate broad digital ambitions into tangible outcomes.

By **Patrick Joy** | Head of Research & Analysis | [Public Sector Network](#)

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## BREAKING DOWN COLLABORATION BARRIERS

Victoria's challenges in fostering inter-agency collaboration reflect broader national struggles but also underscore local complexities.

- **Entrenched Silos:** Attendees identified siloed operations as a significant inhibitor to innovation. A lack of shared accountability and communication leads to duplicated efforts, inefficiencies, and delayed outcomes.
- **Centralised Leadership:** Participants advocated for a "Chief Collaboration Officer" to act as a neutral, central authority capable of coordinating efforts across agencies, enforcing cohesion, and breaking down structural resistance.

## ADVANCING INCLUSIVITY IN DIGITAL SERVICES

The pandemic drove a 70% surge in remote service adoption among individuals with disabilities, highlighting both the potential and the need for targeted accessibility improvements:

- **Inclusive Design Shortcomings:** Current digital platforms often fail to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Roundtable discussions emphasised the importance of embedding inclusivity into the earliest stages of design to prevent exclusion and ensure equitable access.
- **Local Leadership in Accessibility:** Attendees shared successes, such as the Victorian Government's Orange Door initiative, which provides a one-stop access point for individuals navigating family violence and child protection services.

## REGIONAL STRENGTHS

Victoria's thriving technology sector positions it as a leader in innovation and collaboration.

- **AI in Legal Services:** A standout example from the roundtable was Victoria's collaboration with AWS to develop AI tools for automating court processes. The solution reduced document review time by 60% during pilot testing and enabled faster resolution of case backlogs.
- **Hub Models for Complex Needs:** Initiatives such as the Orange Door serve as a blueprint for integrating multi-agency efforts. These hubs simplify service delivery for vulnerable populations and reduce the strain on individual departments.

## LEARNING FROM CRISIS- DRIVEN INNOVATION

COVID-19 served as a proving ground for rapid digital transformation, providing lessons for sustaining momentum which are still yet to be fully capitalised:

- **Adoption at Scale:** During the pandemic, 85% of Victorians used digital vaccination records, demonstrating the feasibility of large-scale implementation when urgency is high.
- **Maintaining Progress:** Roundtable participants emphasised leveraging these gains by institutionalising crisis-driven innovations, ensuring they evolve into long-term solutions rather than temporary measures

# STRATEGIC OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. ESTABLISH CENTRALISED AMBASSADORIAL LEADERS

- Introduce a state-level Chief Collaboration Officer empowered to enforce cross-agency alignment and accountability.
- Develop leadership training programs that equip senior leaders with tools to champion digital transformation effectively.

## 2. EXPAND ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY INITIATIVES

- Require government agencies to adopt inclusive design frameworks as part of their project criteria.
- Collaborate with disability advocacy groups during the development of digital platforms to ensure accessibility needs are met.

## 3. DEVELOP TARGETED DATA SHARING FRAMEWORKS

- Address barriers to inter-agency data sharing by enacting state-wide privacy and interoperability standards.
- Establish a data sandbox environment to allow agencies to prototype data-sharing solutions in a controlled setting, minimising risks.

## 4. SCALE REGIONAL INNOVATIONS

- Use the success of Victoria's AI-powered tools as a foundation for piloting similar technologies across other high-demand areas such as healthcare and infrastructure planning.
- Expand the Orange Door initiative to other sectors, including housing and employment services, creating unified points of access.

## 5. INCENTIVISE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

- Establish a Digital Catalyst Fund to co-finance projects that demonstrate significant productivity and inclusivity outcomes.
- Encourage industry collaboration by creating procurement pathways tailored for innovative, short-term partnerships.

## CONCLUSION

The Melbourne roundtable reaffirmed the GX5 framework's relevance but emphasised the need for regional adaptability. Victoria's distinct approach—grounded in inclusivity, collaboration, and leveraging its tech ecosystem—positions the state as a leader in Australia's digital transformation journey. By aligning regional innovations with national strategies, Victoria can address systemic challenges while driving meaningful, measurable progress.

## FUTURE FOCUS AREAS

- **ENHANCING INTERGOVERNMENTAL DATA SHARING**
  - Develop robust frameworks and infrastructure to facilitate data sharing between Commonwealth and state entities.
- **EXPANDING AI APPLICATIONS**
  - Explore additional areas where AI can be applied to improve efficiency and service delivery across various sectors.
- **STRENGTHENING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS**
  - Encourage more dynamic collaboration models between government and industry to foster innovation.
- **BUILDING TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY**
  - Implement measures to enhance public trust in digital initiatives, including transparent communication and robust privacy protections
- **MONITORING AND EVALUATING PROGRESS**
  - Establish metrics and benchmarks to assess the impact of digital initiatives on productivity and service quality.

By focusing on these areas, the public sector can continue to evolve, ensuring it remains responsive, efficient, and capable of meeting the challenges and opportunities of the digital age.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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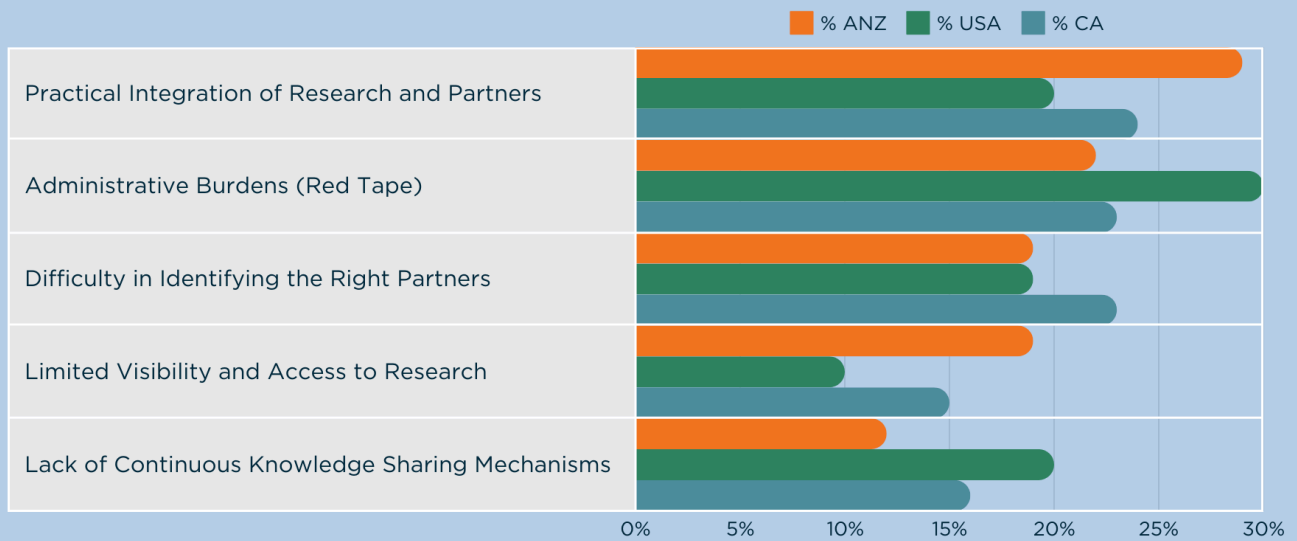
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**Connecting government, industry and academia:** we've been able to engineer a new program antithetical to the classical red tape, administration, and risk-aversion that impedes innovation.

Our program offers senior executives a unique opportunity to gather monthly for PSN-facilitated roundtable sessions with colleagues, academics, and technologists. We run the program at no cost to government executives or academics, and provide attendees a private online group on our global insights exchange platform, access to research briefs, and expert engagement with PSN analysts and facilitators.



## Greatest challenge partnering with Academia or Industry



Source: PSN Research Innovation Council Survey 2024. Total Sample Size: 188 ANZ/ 83 USA/ 80 CA Gov Executives

## 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.

### AUSTRALIA / NEW ZEALAND

P +61 2 9057 9070

E [INFO@PUBLICSECTORNETWORK.COM.AU](mailto:INFO@PUBLICSECTORNETWORK.COM.AU)

### USA

P +1 (647) 969 4509

E [HELLO@PUBLICSECTORNETWORK.COM](mailto:HELLO@PUBLICSECTORNETWORK.COM)

### CANADA

P +1 (647) 459 8904

E [CONTACT@PUBLICSECTORNETWORK.CO](mailto:CONTACT@PUBLICSECTORNETWORK.CO)

### Public Sector Network (Australia) Pty Ltd

ABN - 46 617 870 872 20-40

Meagher Street, Chippendale, Sydney NSW 2008, Australia



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