



CONNECTING
GOVERNMENT

Whole of Government Responses
to Australia's Priority Challenges

MANAGEMENT
ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

4

© Commonwealth of Australia 2004

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the Commonwealth available from the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to the Commonwealth Copyright Administration, Intellectual Property Branch, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, GPO Box 2154, Canberra ACT 2601 or posted at <http://www.dcita.gov.au/cca> .

ISBN 0 97510151X

>> PREFACE

I am pleased to present this important Management Advisory Committee Report on *Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia's Priority Challenges*.

My strong perception is that the Australian Public Service (APS) performs well, compared to other public sectors around the world, in working across the organisational boundaries of bureaucracy. Every day, in many ways, we bridge successfully the demarcations of officialdom that can undermine successful policy development and delivery. But we cannot be lulled into a self-satisfied complacency. Challenges remain. More than ever before, agencies must continue to find new and better ways to work together to deliver results for the Australian Government and the community.

There are many reasons that we should work in a whole of government way. Not least is the fact that every major challenge of public administration—ensuring security, building a strong economy, coping with demographic change and crafting social policy—necessarily requires the active participation of a range of central and line agencies.

Australians rightly demand the delivery of government programs and services in a seamless way. They should also expect that, behind the scenes, all the resources of government will be brought to bear in the search for innovative solutions to the complex challenges of developing public policy.

It is important that commitment to a whole of government perspective is not misinterpreted as a call for 'group think'. Governance has been improved by the fact that public policy is an increasingly contested terrain. The challenge is to ensure that the collective decision-making of the Australian government is based upon the best informed articulation of the challenges faced and a strategic assessment of the relative merits of different approaches to how they might be addressed. For this, a comprehensive whole of government approach is required.

Connecting Government goes beneath the surface of the 'coordination' that the APS strives to achieve. It examines the many different and sometimes competing imperatives that contribute to successful whole of government work and seeks to learn from our successes and failures.

The report does not believe that effective solutions lie in moving around the deckchairs of bureaucratic endeavour. Rather it reinforces the need to continue to build an APS culture that supports, models, understands and aspires to whole of government solutions. Collegiality at the most senior levels of the service is a key part of this culture.

Portfolio secretaries and agency heads will be responsible for driving cooperative behaviours and monitoring the success of whole of government approaches. This has many elements. They will be required to ensure that their staff understand that their role on interdepartmental committees or task forces is not to defend territory but to seek

solutions in the national interest. They will be expected actively to champion whole of government projects and to model critical behaviours such as collegiality.

The report also highlights the need for agencies to recruit and develop people with the right skills. Relevant topics should be included in induction and training so that coordination, cooperation, negotiation and openness are truly valued. Agencies will be encouraged to give their high performing staff experience on whole of government projects and to support their participation with other agencies in such projects.

Commitment needs to be recognised. New service-wide awards will be offered to celebrate the best whole of government work. The success or failure of the APS in taking whole of government approaches will be reported through the State of the Service report.

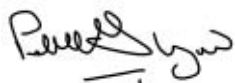
Knowledge is a key to cultural change. A web presence will be established to encourage agencies to share information, expertise and ideas so that the increasing volume of research on the organisation of whole of government approaches can be collected once but used many times.

MAC will fail if its reports are quietly filed away under the heading 'Read on a Wet Sunday'. There are many more initiatives in this report which offer practical help to Australian government agencies in their efforts to continually improve the way they work across boundaries. The objective is to implement many more.

Whole of government is the public administration of the future. It offers links and connections to the global community of ideas, knowledge and understanding essential for the APS to face the governance challenges of the 21st century. It extols team-based approaches to solving the wicked problems that are endemic to public policy.

Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia's Priority Challenges is a valuable guide to participating effectively in that future.

I hope it makes a difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Shergold', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr Peter Shergold AM

NATIONAL ILLICIT DRUGS STRATEGY

Objective

The Australian Government's National Illicit Drugs Strategy (NIDS), *Tough on Drugs*, is a whole of government approach to reducing the supply of, and demand for, illicit drugs. It brings together law enforcement, health and education portfolios and the non-government sector in the pursuit of a government agenda.

NIDS was launched in 1997, with funding of \$109 million, and is funded to continue until June 2007. A number of additional policy measures have since been approved, bringing total funding to approximately \$1 billion. Funding has been provided to a range of Australian government agencies, highlighting the importance of a multi-pronged approach in tackling issues including supply, control, demand reduction and harm reduction.

As part of the government's ongoing National Drug Strategy, NIDS is being implemented in consultation with state and territory governments, the community sector and non-government organisations, including the peak non-government advisory body, the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD), which was established as part of the strategy by the Prime Minister.

To date NIDS has funded initiatives in the areas of:

- treatment
- prevention
- education
- diversion programs
- training and skills development for frontline workers
- monitoring and evaluation
- research
- measures to intercept drugs within Australia and at its borders.

Funding has been used to establish information systems to improve the way drug use and supply are measured, while law enforcement authorities have been assisted to analyse trends in supply control and demand, and harm reduction. Data systems have also been established or improved to draw together critical information about drug use, treatment agencies, user groups, arrest rates and prison populations so that trends can be identified and responses developed. State and territory governments have received project grants as part of NIDS and have also played an important role in developing and implementing policy which cuts across their own jurisdictions.

Key players

Australian government agencies

- Department of Health and Ageing
- Attorney-General's Department
- Australian Federal Police
- Australian Customs Service
- Department of Education, Science and Training
- Department of Family and Community Services
- Department of Finance and Administration
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

State and territory government agencies

- State and territory health
- Justice
- Police
- Attorneys-general departments.

Non-government sector

- Australian National Council on Drugs
- Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia
- Representatives of other agencies and universities.

Overview of learnings

The Australian Government's efforts to address issues around illicit drugs clearly cut across many agency boundaries in both Australian government and state jurisdictions, as well as community organisations and sectors. Results to date indicate a range of learnings from the whole of government approach adopted.

At the outset of a whole of government project it is vital to:

- develop a detailed, comprehensive strategic plan, which should include:
 - clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for all players—this helps to maintain relevance, momentum and 'buy-in'
 - agreed priorities for all players and key outcomes clearly identified
 - establishment of decision-making processes
 - agreed evaluation and review mechanisms for each element, taking into account the fact that different agencies will often have different requirements

- take care in developing systems to share information—agencies have different capabilities and needs
- have a lead agency structural model clearly identified and endorsed by all players, if it is used, so that it can play a valuable role as a central coordination and servicing point
- allow time for relationships to grow, for trust to develop and for information to be shared.

Other learnings include:

- ongoing high-level endorsement of the need for genuine cross-portfolio cooperation can assist in achieving required outcomes
- resourcing issues need to be addressed comprehensively and carefully at the outset, taking into account agencies' different protocols and requirements
- the need to take into account unknown and emerging issues and demands is especially important
- recognition of individual and agency contributions to whole of government projects is important to build ongoing commitment
- rewards for individual/agency contributions to whole of government projects are also an important way of maintaining momentum and engagement
- for some non-government partners, government and its different tiers and portfolios can appear confusing
- early and genuine consultation with the non-government players is vital in achieving their cooperation, contribution and commitment

Features of a good whole of government approach to engaging with the non-government sector include:

- clearly established and identified structures and protocols working to remove or eliminate the barriers between portfolios and sectors, preferably under the direction of a single appointed authority or entity
- good levels of contribution to the project by all stakeholders across sectors.

The project resulted in an improved relationships across and within portfolios, for example within the Attorney-General's portfolio significant links were established between the measures pursued by the Australian Federal Police, Australian Customs Service and the Australian Crime Commission.

Key findings of the areas of investigation

1. Structures and processes

Issues	Response	Key learnings
1	<p>Establishment and maintenance of a coordinating function.</p> <p>High-level, multi-agency committees have been established to oversee implementation. Initially, a taskforce was established and auspiced by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.</p> <p>More recently an interdepartmental committee (IDC) has been operating, auspiced by the Department of Health and Ageing.</p>	<p>The role of a central or lead agency is essential.</p> <p>Information sharing between stakeholders facilitated through the development of protocols and clear communication channels.</p>
2	<p>The roles and responsibilities of each agency in the NIDS package has been clear.</p> <p>While roles of each agency in NIDS are quite clear, it has been necessary to bring agencies together throughout the process.</p>	<p>It is easier to work in a whole of government project when the tasks for each agency are clear, focused and part of the standard business for that agency.</p>
3	<p>Cross-cutting issues that have no natural home within one agency are more challenging to implement.</p> <p>More recently issues that cut across the portfolios are being addressed, such as prevention, and each agency is identifying how it will respond.</p>	<p>It becomes more difficult to work in a whole of government way when the issues to be addressed do not have a natural home. This can require agencies to look at their own culture and organisation, as well as innovation and working creatively between agencies.</p>
4	<p>A role needed to be found for a new key player—ANCD—within a longstanding IDC structure which had not previously accommodated a non-government partner.</p> <p>The IDC has invited the ANCD to join its discussions, particularly in the development and implementation of the last budget process.</p>	<p>It can be particularly important to explicitly define the roles and responsibilities of NGOs.</p>
5	<p>Ongoing engagement by all agencies for the duration of the strategy.</p> <p>Agencies faced the challenge of continuing to engage with a whole of government initiative over a relatively long period of time.</p>	<p>Senior-level representation can assist in maintaining momentum, motivation and strategic direction setting.</p> <p>Levels of engagement and commitment can also be assisted if those attending meetings are empowered to make decisions on behalf of their agencies.</p>
6	<p>IDCs are essential but are time-consuming, and the work for servicing them tends to fall to one agency.</p> <p>Considerable work has been undertaken to maintain effort on the whole of government activity, bringing agencies together, developing joint submissions, and coordinating policy responses.</p>	<p>The resourcing requirements to adequately support whole of government projects within agencies need to be recognised and supported.</p> <p>Roles and responsibilities across boundaries need to be clarified and the benefits of working cooperatively should be made explicit.</p>

2. Culture and capability

	Issues	Response	Key learnings
1	Whole of government approaches within silo programs of funding.	The IDC provided an avenue to raise issues. Ministers have been able to identify progress for activities within their own portfolio.	All agencies need to be able to identify their own role and benefit from engagement in whole of government activity. The political significance of the drugs issue has acted as a key driver to maintain dialogue and cooperation between agencies.
2	Cultural differences between agencies and other stakeholders.	Australia is seen to have advanced inter-agency cooperation on drug issues in comparison with other countries and has received international recognition for this. This has been achieved through developing cross-agency responses, since the 1980s, to activity across the spectrum of harm, supply and demand reduction. Cultural differences have been explored and reduced over time as common language and understandings have developed.	Cultural differences between agencies and other stakeholders need to be recognised. There is a need to nurture relationships and partnerships between agencies and other stakeholders in order to continue relevance and engagement.
3	Incentives to work with other agencies.	The biggest incentives identified for a whole of government approach were that there was clear recognition of the additional value that could be achieved, highest-level support within the government and recognition that significant results had been attained.	High-level interest/ involvement including that of the prime minister and support from government is important to provide a mandate for action. A clearly articulated and widely promulgated and positive outcome can assist in providing continuing incentive and motivation for complex strategies. Incentives or rewards should be considered in recognition of the additional effort that whole of government processes can bring.

3. Information management and infrastructure

	Issues	Response	Key learnings
1	Lack of integrated, dedicated capacity to analyse information across agencies' different systems/platforms.	Different agencies implementing NIDS established a number of different information systems.	NIDS' achievement would have been easier if information systems could have been integrated from the start.
2	The development of data needs and trends.	The IDC has served as the forum to identify information to be shared and the mechanism by which it has occurred.	Information needs, sharing protocols, accessibility and knowledge management should ideally be identified at the outset of a project. In building a picture of successes from NIDS, information from different agencies was identified and analysed.

4. Budget and accountability framework

Issues	Response	Key learnings	
1	<p>The NIDS package clearly links activity to the relevant agency.</p>	<p>Reporting at an agency level has been easier as lines of responsibility have been clear from the outset.</p> <p>The funds are accounted for and reported on at an agency level. Outcomes are reported on at both an agency level and also collectively.</p>	<p>There has always been certainty in who is doing what and what funds are available. This has overcome potential confusion in relation to funding allocations.</p>
2	<p>The development of joint agency funding submissions created some confusion at first.</p>	<p>Close contact between agencies at an IDC level and involvement of senior level employees assisted.</p>	<p>Agencies approach whole of government funding processes with different understandings—these should be clarified as early as possible.</p> <p>Level of seniority at interagency forum affects ability to resolve issues quickly.</p>
3	<p>Accountability has largely been managed at an agency level rather than as a whole of government package.</p>	<p>Each agency has maintained accountability for funds at an agency level to the minister responsible.</p>	<p>Clear lines of accountability need to be determined at the outset both in terms of acquitting funds and identifying ministers responsible for each element of work.</p> <p>If there is to be reporting of activity in a whole of government manner, agencies need to agree on the parameters at the outset.</p>
4	<p>Different agencies have had different expectations and different requirements about evaluating the outcomes of funding.</p>	<p>A range of evaluation mechanisms was adopted by different agencies.</p> <p>Some results from the funding were evident quickly (e.g. from law enforcement agencies), while others will have a longer timeframe to show effect (e.g. health and education activities).</p>	<p>Evaluation mechanisms need to be determined at the outset of projects and evaluation activity needs to be allocated specific funding.</p> <p>It is challenging to bring together a cumulative view on the effect/outcomes of the NIDS package as the range of activity is so diverse. Some of the activities achieve very quick results while the effects of other parts of the package, particularly those that work on prevention, will not emerge for some time.</p> <p>Telling a more united story about the impact of a whole of government task is easier if there is early agreement in relation to joint reporting.</p>

5. Making connections outside the APS

	Issues	Response	Key learnings
1	Non-government involvement is a vital element of NIDS.	<p>The ANCD has promoted extensive consultation with the community since the commencement of NIDS.</p> <p>The ANCD has a strong role in the implementation of NIDS.</p> <p>Its role has gradually expanded to include involvement in the development of budget submissions.</p>	<p>The close involvement of an NGO was initially challenging for many agencies.</p> <p>It has led to stronger and more transparent decision-making processes and a more complete understanding among all parties of the issues different agencies are facing, how they are addressing them, and barriers that are encountered.</p>
2	Consultation needs to be genuine.	In the most recent stages of NIDS, the NGO sector was fully consulted from the earliest stages, and their proposals for action were considered at the highest level.	<p>Consultation with the NGO sector needs to be undertaken in early stages.</p> <p>Exposure to other sectors and discussion about respective roles, responsibilities and expectations at the commencement of a project would assist greater understanding.</p>

Sources

Reference

E Harris, M Mise et al. 1995, *Working Together: Intersectoral Action for Health*, Australian Government Department of Human Services and Health.

Interviews

Ms Lorraine Cormack, Department of Family and Community Services

Mr Craig Harris, Attorney-General's Department

Ms Jenny Hefford, Assistant Secretary, Drug Strategy Branch, Department of Health and Ageing

Ms Sue Kerr, NSW State Manager, Department of Health and Ageing

Mr Peter Jones, Australian Federal Police

Mr Mark Michell, Department of Family and Community Services

Mr Ross O'Donoghue, First Assistant Secretary, Department of Health and Ageing

Mr John Perrin, Prime Minister's Office

Mr Robert Rushby, Australian Customs Service

Ms Margaret Sykes, Department of Education, Science and Training

Mr Noel Taloni, Director, Illicit Drugs Section, Drug Strategy Branch, Department of Health and Ageing

Mr Arthur Townsend, Assistant Secretary, Department of Education, Science and Technology

Mr Gino Vumaca, Executive Officer, Australian National Council on Drugs

Major Brian Watters, Chair, Australian National Council on Drugs

Ms Cheryl Wilson, Executive Officer, Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia