TRUST IN AUSTRALIAN REGIONAL PUBLIC SERVICES:

"CITIZENS NOT CUSTOMERS – KEEP IT SIMPLE, SAY WHAT YOU DO AND DO WHAT YOU SAY"

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We are extremely fortunate to have had the ability to complete this report at this particular moment in the history of the Australian Public Service (APS). There is a distinct sense of renewal occurring inspired both by the APS Review process and the commitment of the Prime Minister to "lifting and improving service delivery for all Australians. Making better use of technology and better integrating service delivery across different portfolios." There is recognition of the need for change tempered by acceptance that there is still much to do to break through the cultural barriers to realise the Government's vision.

We would therefore like to express our gratitude to those collaborators who have helped us define the challenge for service delivery in regional Australia and map some potential pathways to change. Firstly, to our passionate and creative collaborators in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, thank you for your dedication, logistical support and creative input. Secondly, many thanks to our research team – Lain Dare, Robert Tanton, Yogi Vidyattama and Jane Seaborn. Lain's role as project manager has been absolutely invaluable to meeting our research aims.

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Professor Mark Evans, November 2019

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The Operating Environment: Public service delivery in times of distrust

Public sector leaders around the world are facing a common set of challenges to meet the increased expectations of their 'customers', 'consumers', 'clients', or 'citizens' in an era of declining public trust.[1] A common challenge faced by every organisation (public and private) and, particularly the Australian Public Service (APS), is how to service its citizens and businesses, better and at a sustainable cost. To address this, the APS needs to find ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its service delivery functions. This means providing value for money by improving quality of service (accessibility for all and satisfactory citizen experiences and outcomes), and where possible and appropriate, reducing the costs involved in providing those services.

This challenge is particularly acute in regional and rural Australia where a combination of the tyranny of distance, the absence of critical population mass, idiosyncratic demography, more limited smart phone and internet access, the difficulty of attracting core public service capabilities and declining public trust has increased the complexity of service delivery. This is prompting the APS to explore new sustainable models for service delivery – models that can improve user experience and outcomes through enhanced service levels at the same or reduced cost.

We argue in this report that public services can be a critical space for trust-building between government and citizen but this requires development of citizen-centric service models that place the language of the citizen at the centre of service culture, design and delivery and embrace the mantra – "Citizens not customers – keep it simple, do what you say and say what you do". "Citizens and not customers" because the notion of citizenship builds trust. It helps establish a trust system between government and citizen that is based on parity of esteem and creates common ground for transactions to take place. In contrast, given imperfect access to resources, customers are inherently unequal and potentially a force for distrust.

Meeting citizen expectations inevitably requires both a better understanding of the service needs and aspirations of an increasingly segmented citizenry and a service culture that see's like a citizen and not a customer.

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[1] It is noteworthy that the APS does not have a common language to describe the beneficiaries of its programs, products and services; different agencies use different concepts. Henceforth, unless stated we will use the concept of customer, consumer and client interchangeably.

Purpose

The primary objective of this research is to provide the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet with a *better understanding of public demand for, and trust in, Australian public services in regional/rural/remote areas* with the aim of guiding the delivery of responsive public services that better meet the needs of these areas.

The research is designed also to make sense of existing key quantitative findings generated from the 2018-19 *Citizen Experience Survey*:

- satisfaction with Australian public services (52%) is higher than trust in government services (31%);
- public trust is lower in regional (27%) in contrast to urban (32%) areas;
- personal individual service delivery experiences drive overall levels of public trust;
- perceptions of transparency affect trust;
- service experience during significant life events affect trust in the APS;
- citizens and/or residents who were born overseas have higher levels of trust; and,
- citizens do not establish an independent view of the APS – they just see government.

With these observations in mind, the research focuses on identifying regional citizen perceptions of the key barriers and enablers to high quality service delivery, and gathering stakeholder insights into the capability, governance enablers and technologies to support long term policy thinking and service change. It is important to note that this research does not provide a comparative study of regional and urban citizen perspectives. Rather, in recognising the potential differences in service delivery approaches and requirements it focuses on giving voice to the perceptions of regional citizens of Australian government services.

Methods

A participatory action research design was selected for this project ensuring that innovative qualitative research and sampling methods were deployed combined with the latest applied insights. A co-design approach with core stakeholders was used to determine the research design and included:

- a review of national and international practice-based literature on public trust and achieving "line of sight" in the delivery of "customer" oriented service systems;
- documentary analysis of recent reviews of existing APS practice to provide an assessment of the quality of current service systems;
- a series of 'one to one' interviews with senior public servants with a strategic role in the area on the barriers and enablers to improved public service production;
- a qualitative investigation with a representative sample of 34 focus groups conducted across regional and rural Australia, and an additional two conducted in an urban area; and,
- a co-design workshop convened with core stakeholders to translate the research findings in a meaningful way for practice.

Operationalising trust

The survey research draws on the notion of political trust as a relational concept about "holding a positive perception about the actions of an individual or an organisation" (OECD 2017: 16) that requires "keeping promises and agreements" (Hethrington 2005: 1). In addition, we consider trust as a psychological contract between the individual and the organisation as "expectations and obligations" (Cullinane and Dundo., 2006; Rousseau 2001); and simultaneously as a social contract between government and citizens involving rights and obligations. This has commanded the attention of political philosophers since the 17th century from Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, to Rawls and Gauthier, amongst others. We hypothesize that in combination, trust comprises of various micro-psychological contracts between government and citizens that encompass expectations of service culture, quality and obligations and entitlements of citizenship.

It is important to recognize the three different components of trust that operate in a liberal democracy:

- **Trust** occurs when A trusts that B *will* act on their behalf and in their interests to do X in particular and more generally.
- **Mistrust** occurs when A assumes that B *may not* act on their behalf and in their interests to do X but will judge B according to information and context. This definition is associated with the notion of a critical citizen and active citizenship and is viewed to strengthen democracy.
- **Distrust** occurs when A assumes that B is untrustworthy and will cause harm to their interests in respect of X or more generally.

In contrast to mistrust, distrust is viewed to weaken democracy and confidence in government.

We asked focus group participants to describe what a trusted public service meant to them. They were uniform in emphasising the importance of:

- **Integrity** ("honesty", "transparency", "consistency", "say what you do" or procedural fairness).

- **Empathy** ("care", "respect", "understanding").

- **Delivery** ("do what you say"); and, more surprisingly

- **Loyalty** (to "have your back", expectation for institutional paternalism).

These observations help to validate our understanding of the various micro-psychological contracts between government and citizen that encompass expectations of service culture, quality and obligations and entitlements of citizenship. Above all, public trust in government services is earned by delivering ('Do what you say') on the service promise ('Say what you do') in a way that values and respects citizens' rights and input.

In general, our regional focus group findings validate the findings of the *Citizen Experience Survey* and provide greater detail on the factors informing citizen perceptions. For example:

- Trust in politicians in general remains very low and declining political trust does impact on all aspects of citizen trust in government (trust in government services, service satisfaction and confidence in the problem-solving capability of federal government).

- Trust in government services declines by social income and individual and community capability.

- Citizens are less likely to trust services that form part of government policies that they disagree with.

- Negative personal and network experiences of the significant effort required to access complex services diminishes trust.

- Many informants had a negative experience of the service culture except for simple transactional services.

- Digital service delivery is often the preferred channel for simple transactional services for those with capacity and access to digital technology. For complex services, mixed channels of service delivery are crucial. The more complex the service, the greater the need for consistent human support and advocacy.

- Citizens do not distinguish between different levels of government unless prompted; they just see government and expect jurisdictions of government to collaborate effectively.

APS leaders were not surprised by the results of the *Citizen Experience Survey* but did identify several mitigating factors that need to be considered in any response. Firstly, constitutionally the APS cannot address the problem of declining political trust and by implication the role of politicians; although it clearly impacts on public perceptions of the quality of public service delivery. The focus of the APS effort should therefore be on improving the quality of service delivery; a task within the APS's remit of responsibility. Secondly, citizens are less likely to trust services that form part of government policies that they disagree with; hence you will never be able to please everybody. Thirdly, Australians have high expectations of service delivery that might be difficult to meet given budgetary constraints. They expect to have the same quality of experience with public and private sector service providers. It is therefore important to establish a public expectation thesis i.e. given prevailing constraints what could the service provider reasonably be expected to achieve? Fourthly, accessing complex services requires significant effort due to legislative requirements which is likely to lead to diminished trust. The incremental impact of targeting to contain costs has inevitably led to more complex service delivery. Fifthly, many services that Australians receive are, in David Thodey's terms, "seamless" and "invisible" (e.g. PBS, Medicare), but because they do not involve formal evaluation touchpoints go unrecognised by the citizen.

The impact of current public service delivery approaches on trust

APS leaders identified both cognitive and institutional barriers to the delivery of high-quality government services. Cognitive barriers, i.e. obstacles to the capacity of the APS to understand the service needs of Australians citizens and deliver on the service promise, involve:

1. unpredictable target group behaviour due to citizen bias against the policy intervention or frustration with previous service experience;
2. the absence of delivery expertise in APS SES and limited understanding of the imperatives of a service culture;
3. a 'top-down' approach to policy and service design; and,
4. negative perceptions of the "Canberra-bubble" (and the 'tyranny of distance').

The institutional barriers (internal organisational issues which impact on the capacity of public organisations to create and deliver quality public services) identified included: siloed systems that are not conducive to service delivery; complexity in service design and access; difficulty in finding the 'right information, at the right time, in the right context'; reactive service management; and poor communication with citizens about entitlements and obligations; citizens being required to provide information multiple times; and, the complexity of tools provided by government.

A set of environmental barriers were also identified. These are exogenous factors which can undermine the capacity of public organisations to create and deliver quality public services. They are generally beyond the organisation's control but need to be factored into strategic thinking particularly in areas of risk-management and strategic communication to staff. In this instance they include: 1) low levels of political trust; 2) high citizen expectation of the quality of service; 3) low levels of trust between jurisdictions; and, 4) fragmented policy and service systems.

Many APS leaders recognised the need for a whole of government approach that leveraged off the APS footprint to combat declining trust in regional and remote communities, informed by three service delivery principles:

- regional decentralisation;
- user-first design; and,
- personalisation supported by a strong service culture.

APS leaders and citizens share a common concern with two conceptual barriers to quality service delivery: that a 'top-down' approach to policy and service design dominates determined by 'faceless Canberra bureaucrats' with a perceived lack of understanding of the needs of regional and rural Australians; and, negative perceptions of the 'Canberra bubble' compounded by the 'tyranny of distance'. Although, it must be emphasised that it would be wrong to exaggerate the urban-regional-rural divide with respect to trust in government services. Regional and rural Australians are only somewhat more disaffected than their urban counterparts and there is often a false division of citizens based on their geography. This research found that regional citizens perceptions of service delivery were similar to urban citizens – while delivery approaches may vary, the service qualities demanded by regional and urban are generally the same.

Citizen perceptions of environmental barriers to quality service delivery tend to focus on localised economic, political and social factors that mediate or embed broader perceptions of trust/distrust in government services. For example, the seasonal nature of the economy in certain parts of regional Australia adds a degree of complexity to the relationship between citizens and government that heighten distrust; the system is seen as not responsive to people with abnormal working patterns and it becomes easier not to engage or to seek alternative pathways (e.g. use of the 'black' economy, family and/or community support, or 'go without').

In other areas, a sense of economic insecurity due to the changing nature of local economic conditions is impacting on declining trust in government services and the view not only that 'the government doesn't care' but that the government deliberately makes it more and more difficult to get the help that they are entitled to, and that they don't provide services appropriate to their specific circumstances (e.g. support during times of economic downturn or restructuring due to closure of major industries or in times of disaster management due to fires, floods or drought).

Many focus group participants accepted that certain services would be more difficult to access in regional and rural settings due to escalating costs of provision; however, they also contended that the higher costs of living in regional Australia legitimated increased provision (i.e. increased costs results in increased GST paid, so they were 'owed' improved services).

In general, there exists within this cohort very low patterns of political trust in federal politicians. Indeed, it was consistently difficult to steer focus groups away from negative discussions about politicians; however, the urban groups similarly were highly cynical.

Socially, there is also evidence of increasing antagonism and declining social trust due to perceptions that particular groups (mainly New Australians and asylum seekers, and to a lesser extent Indigenous Australians) are getting special treatment.

Most of the perceived barriers to quality service delivery identified by citizens tend to be institutional in character and again replicate many of the concerns of APS leaders:

- **poor service communication** – citizens' awareness, access and use of services is hampered by poor information and communication;
- **siloed service delivery** – leading to time delays and inconsistent outcomes;
- **poor service culture** – low trust is based on the negative experiences of both the individual citizen and their kinship networks and manifest in lack of empathy, timeliness, pressure to use phone/online delivery approaches, inconsistent information, and poor accountability;
- **complexity of service needs** – increases the likelihood of negative experience compared to simpler transactional services.

Impacts on the uptake of Australian public services in regional areas

The focus groups identified a range of influences affecting service uptake which have strong linkages with the characteristics of trust previously identified. Some factors are based on prior experience (demand-side drivers), others relate to the performance of government (supply-side drivers):

- **Poor communication –** a lack of awareness of available services was the most cited reason for lack of service uptake. Other communication issues included poor information provision on websites (complexity, jargon, poor navigation) and insufficient advice from service providers about additional services available.
- **Complexity of service delivery –** complexity of service delivery was both a significant eroder of trust and an inhibitor of service uptake. Simplification of application and compliance requirements is deemed essential for improved uptake of available services.
- **Improved resourcing and service culture is essential for uptake and equitable provision** – service delivery delays and perceived poor treatment from frontline staff inhibited service uptake.

Service complexity, coupled with the push for online service delivery, inhibits many vulnerable people from being able to access services. Advocacy from family, friends, NGOs or service providers helps certain citizens to navigate service delivery processes in a respectful manner. But they are the lucky ones.

Improving trust in public services in regional Australia

The key findings that emerge from this research are reflected in the subtitle of our report – *"Citizens not consumers – keep it simple, say what you do and do what you say".* The evidence from our research points to the need to drive a public sector reform agenda that:

- empowers service users as citizens with rights and obligations;
- builds whole of government collaboration;
- enhances the quality of service-delivery reform, and
- co-designs tailored responses with the citizenry that reflect the plurality of individual and community identities in Australia.

It should also be noted that regional Australians in the vast majority of the communities we visited, welcomed and enjoyed the opportunity to engage with us on these issues. The findings demonstrate that everyday Australian citizens have the capability to both identify service problems and make informed suggestions for their improvement. When we asked our sample of focus group participants how service provision could be improved, they proposed many similar changes to our sample of APS policy leaders although articulated in a different language:

- **Improve the service experience** – cut the complexity, reduce the silos, collaborate across jurisdictions, make services easier to access, increase the knowledge and interpersonal skills of front-line staff;
- **Increase the transparency of the service process** – including clear lines of accountability between government and citizen;
- **Embed a service culture** – address issues of poor service through reforms that recognise and respect citizens – improved training and resourcing of front-line staff is deemed essential;
- **Deliver for citizens** – deliver services that suit citizens not government. Make them accessible by reducing wait times, hold office hours outside normal business hours to improve access, use a variety of delivery platforms that are designed for the local context;
- **Ensure that the right information is in the right place at the right time** – improve clarity of, and access to, information and thereby increase awareness of services. Use a variety of channels to target segmented audiences.

In summary, citizens have high expectations of service culture, quality and procedural fairness. They see these expectations as entitlements of citizenship. Public trust in government services is therefore undermined by:

- Localised social, economic and political factors (demand-side factors)
- Perceptions of a 'top-down', impersonal service culture (supply-side factors)
- Negative personal and social network experiences (demand-side factors)
- Perceptions of procedural unfairness (supply-side factors)

The degree of common ground between citizens and APS leaders on both the barriers and enablers to a higher quality service experience is remarkable and helps us to clarify pathways to reform. Many of the underlying drivers of trust and areas for potential improvement stem from and/or are exacerbated by current service systems and culture. We therefore propose a set of future-state options drawing on international best practice and citizen and stakeholder insights. The following recommendations do not

represent a commitment by PM&C or the Australian Government to change but have been distilled by the research team for further exploration by the APS.

1. **Achieve 'line of sight'** between policy, programs and services around the first principle of integrating program management and delivery functions through regional service centres.
2. **Citizen-centred service culture** – introduce a 'user-first', 'co-design' approach for all services and a personalisation approach with strong advocacy capability for citizens experiencing complex problems. Citizens expect greater personal care and support.
3. **Capacity, communication and capability** – enhance service culture capability, greater advocacy support for the vulnerable and intelligent marketing and communication of government services through targeted channels (strategic communication and engagement).
4. **Service quality** – establish a single source of truth across government information and reduce the complexity of the service offer.
5. **Service experience** – introduce a 'tell us once' integrated service system which values the time of the citizen and understands and empathises with their service journeys.
6. **Citizen-centred service innovation** – an opportunity for innovation lies in digital access and support; the creation of integrated regional service hubs; the recruitment of "trusted" and "local" community service coordinators; and viewing complaints as learning opportunities.

Ongoing research

There are at least seven important gaps in our knowledge of the present APS service system in regional Australia that require consideration:

1) The findings of this research are not new, many of these barriers and enablers have been identified over recent decades, although this comprehensive focus on regional citizens does provide novel insights. Given that we have known these challenges for some decades, why has more change not materialised? More research is needed to better understand disconnections in line-of sight whole of Commonwealth government and between jurisdictions and the community sector. What is constraining positive changes in service delivery?
2) There is a lack of coherence around the common purpose, principles and operational parameters governing the present APS service delivery framework. The data reported here demonstrates that staff both anticipate and expect change and they believe a culture shift is looming through the launch of both Services Australia and the APS Review. In the main, morale is fairly good (with some outliers) but a sense of uncertainty about the future is palpable and there are diminished levels of trust between policy owners, program managers and service providers. In sum, the present governing context provides an opportune time for change.
3) We have no data on the views of street level bureaucrats on the strengths, weaknesses and future development of the present service system and yet we know from existing literature that service innovation largely emerges from the frontline.

4) Despite significant public investment over the past decade, we also have limited evidence on what works in terms of regionally and rurally-based governance structures for coordinating citizen-facing services.

5) We also have limited geospatial mapping of existing service and program delivery. Developing the ability to understand what is being delivered into a community by postcode (or other relevant spatial measure) would provide a powerful planning and decision-making tool. For example, we could use this to map under and over-supply of services in relation to the SEIFA index (see Figure 10).

6) At the core of this change process is the need for better collaborative practice and yet our understanding of what this looks like in practice is limited. A research-practice program could be established to identify and share best-practice collaboration principles.[2]

7) We have limited knowledge about the costs of delivering a siloed approach versus an integrated service approach suggesting the need for the Department of Finance to undertake a productivity review of the existing service delivery system.

These are significant gaps in the evidence base that, if bridged, could enable better decision-making on regional service delivery problems and solutions.

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[2] See: Evans, M. (2019), *Discovery Report: Building a culture for change: from "collegiality" to "collaboration",* A joint submission from AusIndustry, Strategic Policy, Economic and Analytical Services and The Science and Commercialisation Division, Department of Industry, Innovation and Science and Evans, M. (2018), *Methodology for Evaluating the Quality of Collaboration*, Canberra, IGPA.

PROLOGUE

SES perspectives on the barriers and enablers to service improvement

The following key quotes from key APS leaders provide a direct insight into current thoughts an perceptions around the challenge of trust in service delivery and potential changes to address issues of distrust. This research works to [dis]prove some of these claims and help refine the changes to make a real impact in trust in Australian public service delivery.

Defining the challenge

"The most fundamental problem is that people don't really make any distinction between the APS and the government and we can't solve the fundamental problem".

"What worries me is we keep on knowing what the problem is, we keep on articulating it and why are we not doing anything about it? That's what worries me. So my question is, have we sufficiently articulated the barriers from a bureaucratic perspective to actually make change? We seem to know what the problems are but we actually don't get out on the ground and try to do real solutions when we need to (KS8)".

"I think if you're entrusted to do something, I think everything that you do, should be done in the good faith of delivering it because you want to do it for the betterment of Australia and the Australian people. I'm just not sure that we're all committed to that vision (KS12)."

"People and communities don't really give a crap about what agency they're using. They're not really interested in our government structures. I think what they're interested in is getting on and doing the things they need to be doing in an efficient and effective way and being able to do that freely. I think we're sort of moving along that path but I also think there's a huge amount of complexity even in the simplest services that we provide for users, around compliance and paperwork and all that kind of stuff. And, if you've got no exposure to government then you're suddenly having to be in that space, I think it's a pretty horrific experience" (KS11).

"We actually keep promoting SES because of their cleverness, for want of a better description. Yeah, they're economists and they're this and they're that. We don't promote people on their engagement skills I don't believe. We don't promote on their broader problem-solving skills. So it's not about whether you're recruiting them, whether you're promoting them internally wherever you're getting them from. I think we go on about diversity, we are missing the diversity in the broad depth and breadth of skills that you need and we do not need a whole bloody SES of economists (KS8)".

Making the change

"Don't make assumptions. As humans we will take the quickest route. Our brains are just wired to do that so we will often make quite significant generalisations about regional areas. We make assumptions that they don't have very good internet access, we make assumptions that they all have fabulous relationships with their neighbours that live 5ks down the road. We all make assumptions that we know each other's business and I think that's really dangerous/ We need to find out". (KS9).

"Delivering better services and by this I mean services that involve less effort and are more tailored to the person will improve their satisfaction with the government and their trust in government (KS1)."

"We need to use complaints as an opportunity for learning (KS5)."

"I think an opportunity [for disruptive change] is the APS review. So I think the APS review could be one of the things that leads us to operate differently (KS2)."

"Making use of natural pathways so rather than inserting something new and disrupting the natural order of things for the citizen, we make use of the doctors, GPs and the newsagents, the post offices, the existing mechanisms that are in place that they already rely on and have trusted relationships with…use of third parties…what we've found in that space…is that use of third parties is a good thing but only when they are a trusted entity and known to the individual. I think that applies probably to a greater extent in regional areas than it would in cities (KS9)."

"Invest in capability for service delivery. That has to be our platform. And we haven't done that, we've neglected it, both sides of parliament (KS6)."

1. INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH CONTEXT – THE BURNING PLATFORM OF DISTRUST

The evidence from international and sectoral studies of service delivery is that public sector leaders around the world are facing a common set of challenges to meet the increased expectations of their 'customers', 'clients', or 'citizens' in an era of declining public trust[3]; however, while the challenges may be consistent, the ways in which they are being confronted, and the results that are being achieved, vary considerably.

A common challenge faced by every organisation (public and private), and particularly the Australian public service (APS), is how to better service its clients, citizens and businesses, and at a sustainable price. To address this, the APS needs to find ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its service delivery functions.

This challenge is particularly acute in regional and rural Australia where, as identified by the *Citizen Experience Survey*, citizens have a lower level of trust in Australian public services compared to their urban counterparts. In regional and remote Australia effective and efficient service delivery is potentially compromised by a combination of the 'tyranny of distance', the absence of critical population mass, idiosyncratic demography, sporadic smart phone and internet access, and the difficulty of attracting and maintaining core capabilities.

This reduced trust in Australian public services is prompting the APS to explore new, sustainable models for regional service delivery: models that can improve user experience and outcomes through enhanced service levels at the same or reduced cost. The first stage in this process of discovery is to give voice to the diverse views of users, to make sense of their journeys through the service system, and, to use their insights to improve the citizen experience. The *Regional trust in Australian public services* project gives voice to these insights.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The primary objective of this research is to provide the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet with a better understanding of public demand for, and trust in, Australian public services in regional/rural/remote areas, with the aim of guiding the delivery of responsive public services that meet the needs of users in these areas. The report builds on existing quantitative research conducted by the Department on citizens' perceptions of government services, the *Citizen Experience Survey.* The research is also designed to: enhance other data collections and reporting of the Department; enable the Department to guide cross-agency collaboration on Australian public service reform; and, provide research insights that can be used by other APS agencies to improve specific service delivery design and reform.

With these objectives in mind the report focuses on four key research questions:

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[3] It is noteworthy that the APS does not have a common language in this regard.

1. What characteristics of public service delivery approaches (i.e. design) are supporting or inhibiting trust in Australian public services in regional areas, and how do regional citizens want to receive public services?
2. Is the regional trust deficit affecting the uptake of Australian public services in regional areas?
3. Are there particular barriers (e.g. service communication constraints) affecting the uptake of Australian public services in regional areas?
4. How can the Australian Public Service (APS) improve trust in public services in regional Australia?

Many of the underlying drivers of trust and areas for potential improvement stem from, and/or are exacerbated by, current service systems and culture. The report therefore proposes alternate future-state options drawing on international better practice and stakeholder insights. In addition, the report includes recommendations for future research and best practice- methods for engagement with these specific communities.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A modified participatory action research design was selected for this project ensuring that innovative qualitative research and sampling methods were deployed combined with the latest applied insights from key public service actors (see Figure 1). A mixed methods approach to data collection was co-designed with core stakeholders and included:

- a review of national and international practice-based literature on public trust and achieving 'line of sight' in the delivery of 'customer' oriented service systems;
- documentary analysis of recent reviews of existing APS practice to provide an assessment of the quality of current service systems;
- workshops with a) strategic policy actors and b) data experts to inform the project design and delivery;
- a series of 'one to one' interviews with senior public servants with a strategic role in the area on the barriers and enablers to improved public service production; and with frontline service delivery staff[4];
- a representative sample of 34 focus groups conducted across regional and rural Australia; and two comparative focus groups in an urban community; and,
- a co-design workshop convened with core stakeholders to translate the research findings in a meaningful way for practice.

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[4] Access to frontline service delivery staff was difficult with staff not given permission to participate in the research. This results in a gap in our understanding of their experiences and insights which warrants further research where such permission is granted from the outset.

Figure 1. Research Design

THE STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is organised into five substantive sections and a conclusion. Following this introduction, Section Two reviews the existing academic and grey literatures of trust in regional service delivery. The lessons from this review inform the presentation of the analytical framework and research methodology in Section Three. In Sections Four and Five, we present the key findings from the focus group and elite interview components of the project. The concluding section highlights six focus areas of improvement for the Department and maps the constituent elements of a change management strategy as a plausible way forward to building trust systems between government and citizen, through reform of Australian public service delivery.

2. UNDERSTANDING AND EXPLORING TRUST IN PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

This section presents a summary of the Rapid Review which is provided in full in Appendix 1

There is no unified literature that focuses directly on the issue of trust in government services in regional Australia. There are significant literatures that focus on different aspects of trust/distrust in government and the management and delivery of public services in general. On the latter issue we can find a small number of specific studies that reflect on the difficulties of delivering specific types of services to regional, rural and remote communities. These studies tend to focus on various barriers and potential enablers to primary and specialist service delivery in areas such as family, health and disability services.

There is a literature on community capability, resilience and cohesion in regional Australia which addresses issues of institutional capacity that is relevant but not a core concern of our study. The contention here is that regional communities with a critical mass of public and social institutions and associated networks are more likely to engender public trust in government services; there is also a much larger literature that focuses on service delivery in remote indigenous communities which is outside the scope of this study.

On the issue of how public organisations can address delivery problems there are three pertinent literatures for this study: that on integrated service delivery and mastering complexity through coherence; citizen-centred design thinking; and, long-standing literature on implementation gaps or slippage.

These literatures form the focus of our attention in this rapid review.

WHAT IS TRUST AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY?

DEFINING TRUST

We understand trust as a relational concept about 'keeping promises and agreements' (Hetherington, 2005, p. 1). This is in keeping with the OECD's definition where trust is "holding a positive perception about the actions of an individual or an organization" (OECD 2017, p. 16). We also recognise the notion of trust as a psychological contract between the individual and the organisation as "expectations and obligations" (Cullinane and Dundon, 2006; Rousseau, 2001); and, the broader notion of trust as a social contract between government and citizen involving rights and obligations which has commanded the attention of political philosophers since the 17th century from Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, to Rawls and Gauthier, amongst others. We hypothesize that we can abstract from these overlapping definitions various micro-psychological contracts between government and citizen that encompass expectations of service culture, quality and obligations and entitlements of citizenship.

We hypothesize that in combination, trust comprises of various micro-psychological contracts between government and citizens that encompass expectations of service culture, quality and obligations and entitlements of citizenship.

It is important to recognize the three different components of trust that operate in a liberal democracy:

- **Trust** occurs when A trusts that B *will* act on their behalf and in their interests to do X in particular and more generally.
- **Mistrust** occurs when A assumes that B *may not* act on their behalf and in their interests to do X but will judge B according to information and context. This definition is associated with the notion of a critical citizen and active citizenship and is viewed to strengthen democracy.
- **Distrust** occurs when A assumes that B is untrustworthy and will cause harm to their interests in respect of X or more generally.

In contrast to mistrust, distrust is viewed to weaken democracy and confidence in government.

For the purposes of this study, this would mean that public trust in government services is earned by agencies delivering on the service promise in a way that values and respects citizen input. Given this understanding, for this study trust is defined as "*A citizen's belief that [the institutions of government] fulfil their mandates with competence and integrity, acting in pursuit of the broader benefit of society*" (OECD, 2017, p. 23).

WHAT'S GOING ON? SUPPLY AND DEMAND-SIDE THEORIES OF POLITICAL TRUST

How you tackle the problem of declining trust depends upon how you define the problem, and our data and review of the international literature demonstrate that the problem is multi-dimensional requiring a broad range of responses. The literature can be organised loosely around demand and supply-side theories of trust.

Demand-side theories focus on how much individuals trust government and politics and explore their key characteristics. What is it about citizens (such as their educational background, class, location, country or cohort of birth) which makes them trusting or not? What drives the prospects for political engagement, and what makes citizens feel that their vote counts; or, that their active engagement could deliver value? In general, the strongest predictors of distrust both in Australia and internationally continue to be attitudinal and are connected to negativity about politics experienced in different ways by different groups of citizens depending upon their social and economic circumstances, and the perceived relative power of their political voice.

It is therefore unsurprising that the most marginalised members of our society are embedded in disadvantaged communities and are the most distrusting of government services. Demand-side interventions therefore focus on overcoming various barriers to social, economic or political participation through improved civic or adult education, labour market activation, public participation, and improved representation of marginalised groups, and other forms of institutionalised citizen empowerment.

Supply-side theories of trust start from the premise that public trust must in some way correspond with the trustworthiness of government. The argument here is that it is the performance (supply) of government that matters most in orienting the outlooks of citizens, together with its commitment to procedural fairness and equality. Interventions on the supply-side therefore seek to enhance the integrity of government and politicians, and the quality and procedural fairness of service delivery or parliamentary processes through open government or good governance. This includes mechanisms of transparency and accountability, enhancing public service competence and adopting anti-corruption measures. Performance legitimacy

comes from the public's assessment of the government's record in delivering public goods and services like economic growth, welfare and security (Boswell 2018). If important, as commonly assumed, then public confidence should relate to perceptual and/or aggregate indicators of policy outputs and outcomes, such as satisfaction with the performance of the economy or the government's record on education and healthcare.

Procedural legitimacy focuses on the way that officeholders are nominated to positions of authority through meritocratic processes, and the mechanisms of accountability for office-holders, and whether citizens feel that these processes and mechanisms are appropriate, irrespective of their actions and decisions (Tyler and Trinkner, 2017). These issues of performance legitimacy also extend to the construction of representative politics, and the way that representative institutions work and operate in terms of the conduct of the business of government (see Alonso, Keane and Merkel, 2017).

We argue that, since it is beyond the decision-making authority of the APS to address the problem of declining public trust with politicians, it makes more sense to focus our attention on how the APS can deliver the best service experience possible and contribute to bridging the trust divide. This draws us inexorably towards particular supply-side theories of trust which focus on enhancing the quality of public service production. Trust in public services matters because this is where citizens interact with government and an opportunity is provided for strengthening the quality of democratic governance. Intuitively, public service design and delivery should be a fertile space for trust building.

WHY TRUST AND DISTRUST MATTER

If social trust captures relations between citizens, political trust goes more directly to the issue of whether citizens trust their political leaders, when in government, to do the right thing and as Donald Kettle (2017, p. 1) puts it, "keep their promises in a just, honest, and efficient way". There is widespread concern among scholars and in popular commentary that citizens have grown more distrustful of politicians, sceptical about democratic institutions, and disillusioned with democratic processes or even principles (see Dalton, 2004). Weakening political trust is thought to erode civic engagement and conventional forms of political participation such as voter registration or turnout (Franklin 2004), to reduce support for progressive public policies (Van Deth et al., 2007) and promote risk adverse and short-termist government (Hetherington, 2005), and to create the space for the rise of authoritarian populist forces (Norris and Ingehart, 2018). Also, there may be implications for long-term democratic stability; liberal democratic regimes are thought most durable when built upon popular legitimacy (Almond and Verba, 1963).

The risks of democratic backsliding are regarded as particularly serious if public scepticism spreads upwards from core institutions of governance to corrode citizen perspectives about the performance of liberal democracy and even its core ideals (see Diamond and Plattner, 2015; Mounk, 2018; and, Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). Others counter that the picture should not be exaggerated, as anxiety about public trust in government usually ebbs and flows over the years (Norris, 1999 and 2011).

In many discussions, it is often naively and automatically assumed that any erosion of social and political trust among citizens is inherently problematic, as it reduces the incentives for cooperation. The Australian case is distinctive also in the sense that it is unusual to see such a crisis in political trust when the economy

is performing so well. Despite an extensive period of economic growth, the majority of Australians have little faith in the system of government being able to do anything about the big problems in their lives or those facing society more generally. Declining political trust undermines public confidence in the ability of government to perform its core tasks and address the big public policy problems of our times (Stoker et al., 2018b). It impacts negatively on social cohesion at a time when we need more integrated communities (Miranti and Evans, 2017) and, makes it more difficult for Australia to lead on key geopolitical issues and champion liberal democracy when it is under threat globally (OECD, 2017).

In sum, trust is integral to effective government. It is the 'glue' that enables collective action for mutual benefit; without trust our ability to make social progress is constrained severely. Arguably trust is even more important in a federated state where collaborative problem solving is fundamental to maintaining nation building efforts.

But where can we conceptualise trust in government services in this space? Intuitively, political trust can impact positively or negatively on public perceptions of the quality of public service delivery. At the same time, trust in government services could also impact positively or negatively on political trust or other dimensions of trust such as social trust or public confidence in government. Whether there is a significant relationship between these variables is an empirical question and one that we will pursue in our empirical research.

WHAT DO AUSTRALIANS THINK ABOUT THE SERVICES THEY RECEIVE?

Base-line findings from the *Citizen Experience Survey* undertaken by the Department of PM&C indicate that despite similar satisfaction rates with public services as urban citizens, and similar levels of effort to access and receive public services, only 27 percent of regional Australians trust Australian government public services, compared with 32 percent of urban citizens. These low levels of trust, despite high levels of satisfaction, highlight that government performance (where here trust in public services is a proxy) is only one factor driving citizens' confidence in government (Sims, 2001). Rather, government performance – and with it citizen trust in public services, trust in government and trust in democracy – is the result of complex interacting processes which reach beyond service delivery, including: policy and program design which attempts to reconcile diverging interests and balance numerous political and resource constraints, media framing of government performance, and, the behaviour of political elites (Sims, 2001; Stoker et al., 2018b).

DO AUSTRALIANS HAVE PREFERENCES IN TERMS OF HOW SERVICES ARE DELIVERED?

We only have national data on this issue; therefore, we will explore this issue in our focus group research. There is a sustained willingness amongst the Australian citizenry to use online services and a preference for online services over other delivery channels in simple transactional service areas (Evans and Halupka, 2017); however, evidence from the Department of Human Services (Senate Estimates July 2018 to February 2019) suggests that "face to face" channels remain the most effective driver of citizen satisfaction especially for more complex services. It is evident that the mix of channels is important to respond to the different needs of citizens. As Carter and Belanger (2005) observe these factors inform the trustworthiness

of e-government services and influence broader service uptake; citizens need to trust both the agency and the technology (Lee and Turban, 2001).

WHAT DO REGIONAL AUSTRALIANS PERCEIVE TO BE THE BARRIERS TO SERVICE DELIVERY?

The data presented in sections three and four of the report are useful in terms of helping us to identify potential barriers to the take-up of public services. It draws on findings from the secondary literature on regional Australia. Here we use Sabatier's (1986) seminal model of the implementation gap to identify potential cognitive, environmental and institutional barriers to the delivery of government services in regional Australia to organise evidence from the secondary literature (see Figure 2).

Cognitive barriers refer to obstacles to the capacity of the APS to understand the service needs of Australians citizens and respond to the needs and aspirations of local communities. Institutional barriers refer to organisational issues, largely linked to resources of different kinds (e.g. financial, knowledge, target group political support) which impact on the capacity of public agencies to create and deliver quality public services.

Environmental barriers refer to exogenous factors which can undermine the capacity of public organisations to create and deliver quality public services. Most environmental factors are beyond the control of service providers but need to be factored into strategic thinking particularly in areas of risk-management. These can include issues such as socio-economic and environmental conditions, and support from federal, state and local politicians and media.

The most significant sources of slippage in service delivery reported in the broader implementation literature tend to arise from six main sets of institutional factors[5]:

1. Ambiguous and inconsistent service objectives;
2. Inadequate causal theory of change and understanding services as a means to an end and not an end in themselves;
3. Failure of the implementation process to ensure compliance because of inadequate resources, and/or inappropriate policy instruments;
4. The discretion of street-level bureaucrats and the recalcitrance of the implementing officials;
5. Lack of support from affected communities and relevant government agencies;
6. Unstable and uncertain socio-economic contexts which undermine either political support and/or the causal theory.

Here, issues of environmental context and how services are designed and implemented come into sharp focus, which is explored empirically in this study.

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[5] See Dunleavy 2010; Halligan 2011; Hill and Hupe 2003; Hupe 2017; Newman 2005; Peters 2013; Redell 2008; Schofield and Sausmann 2004.

Cognitive barriers
- Community perceptions of being left behind (rural realism)
- 'Top-down' approach to policy and service design
- Negative perceptions of Federal government
- The long time required to foster community acceptance
- Extent of behavioural change required

Environmental barriers
- Social isolation
- Public support
- Support of local media
- Socio-economic conditions and technology
- Attitudes and resources of constituency groups
- Support from federal, state and local politicians
- Commitment and leadership skills of implementing officials
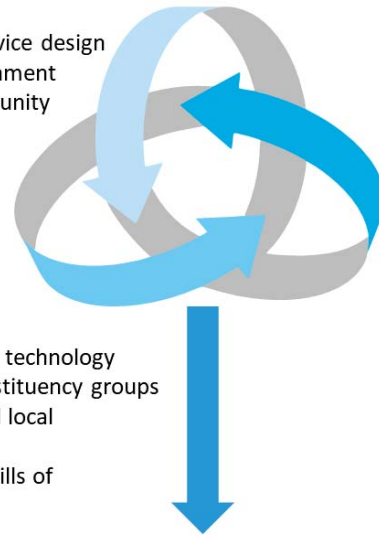
Institutional barriers
- Unsympathetic service culture
- Unclear and inconsistent objectives in service delivery
- Incorporation of adequate causal theory of change
- Adequate allocation of financial resources
- Hierarchical integration within and among implementing organisations
- Inflexible decision rules of implementing agencies
- Recruitment of front-line staff with adequate skills/training
- Challenge of managing confidentiality in small communities
- Technical support
- Access to appropriate service providers and advocacy groups

Stages in the service delivery process

Outputs of implementing agencies	Compliance with policy outputs by target groups	Actual impacts of policy outputs	Perceived impacts of policy outputs	Major revision in policy
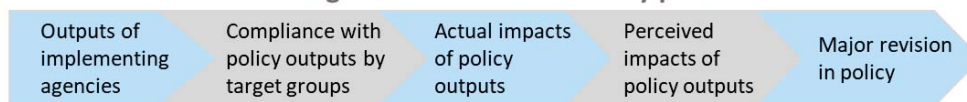
Figure 2. Barriers to service delivery in regional Australia[6]

HOW CAN THE APS IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY?

Our review of the public management literature suggests that there is an emerging understanding of the constituent elements of a better practice service delivery framework that is applicable to both urban and regional settings. The most common supply-side elements that are used to build an effective service delivery framework include:

- **Service culture** – normally directed by the host Department's strategic vision and delivered through its leadership principles, APS values, business processes and performance framework. Once a service delivery system and realistic service level agreements have been established, there is no other component more integral to the long-term success of a service organisation than its culture.

- **Organisational capacity and capability** – even the best designed processes and systems will only be effective if carried out by organisations with the capacity, and people with the capability, to deliver. Organisational capacity and capability are key determinants of service excellence. In cases

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[6] This is an interactive model in the sense that these sets of variables do not exist in a vacuum; they interact in complex and often unexpected ways.

where services are augmented through forms of collaborative governance with States, territories or the community sector a focus needs to be placed on evaluating the quality of collaboration.

- **Service quality** – includes strategies, processes and performance management systems. The strategy and process design is fundamental to the design of the overall service management model.

- **Service experience** – is a little trickier as it involves both demand and supply-side interventions – the latter involves user intelligence, account management and continuous improvement and the former works on the basis that the user/stakeholder is part of the creation and delivery of the service and then designs processes built on that philosophy – this is called co-creation or co-design.

- **Service innovation and forward thinking** – is a supply-side intervention and ensures that the organisation has access to a strong evidence base on what works and has developed innovation systems to allow it to build effective knowledge networks to co-create new service products to stay ahead of the game.

By implication, this study explores whether these five elements are integrated effectively within current service systems and achieving 'line of sight' between goals, policies, programs, services and their achievement (see Lissack and Roos, 1999).

CONCEPTUALISING TRUST IN THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

This rapid review of selective academic and practice-based literatures has helped us to establish the constituent elements of an analytical framework for identifying the drivers of trust in government services and, by implication, the barriers and potential enablers to service delivery. As Figure 3 illustrates, we hypothesize that public trust in government services is driven by a combination of demand and supply-side factors that shape service expectations and satisfaction.

The critical demand-side factors include citizen perceptions derived from direct personal and network experiences of service provision. These perceptions are also informed by socio-economic, political and environmental factors. The critical supply-side factors include citizen perceptions of the service culture, organisational capacity and capability and experience.

These demand and supply-side factors can be understood as a series of micro-contracts between government and citizen that either undermine or promote trust in government services depending on the quality of service provision and the changing environmental context.
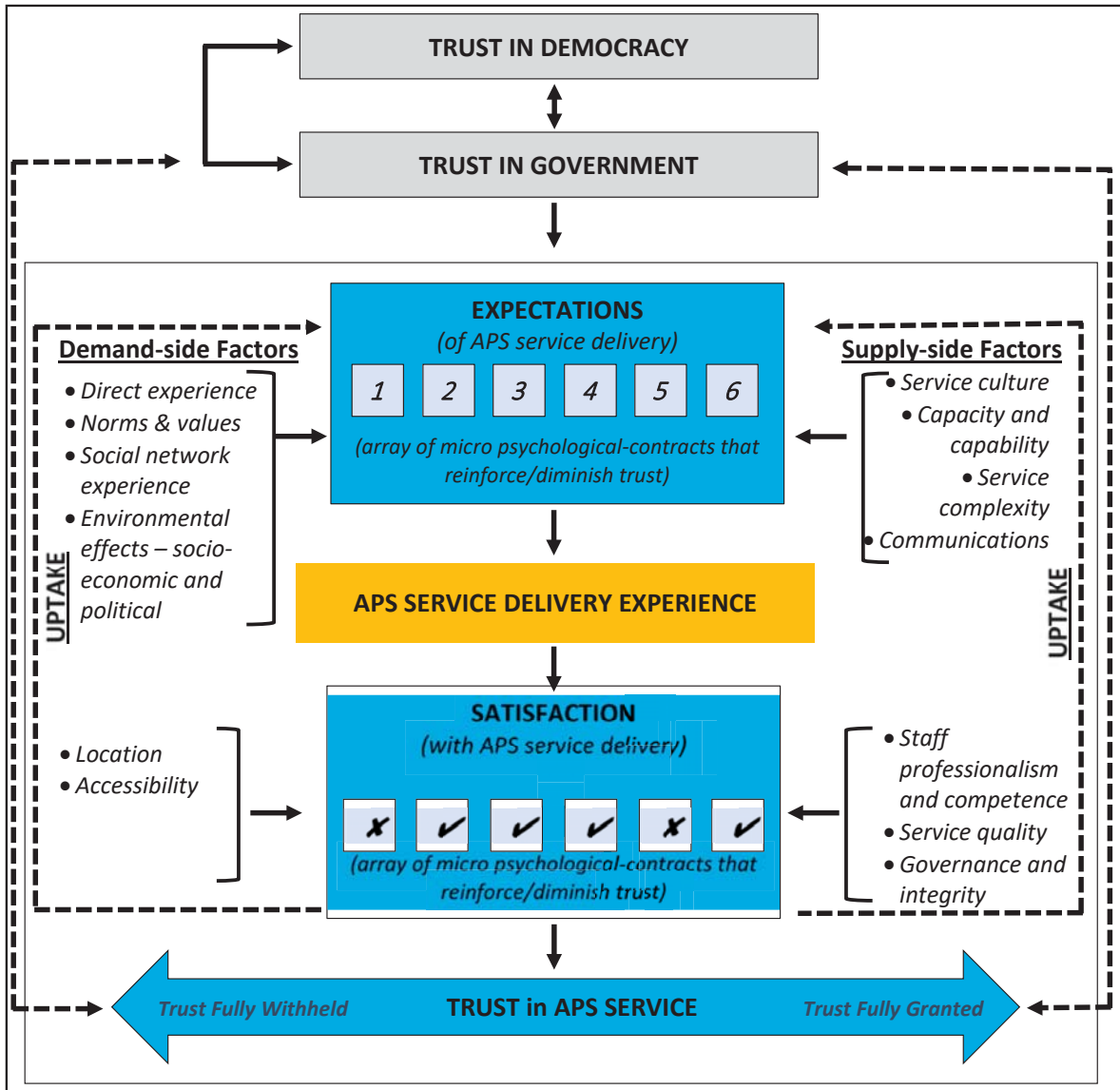
Figure 3. Framework for understanding perceptions of trust in APS public service

3.   RESEARCH DESIGN

The objectives of the *Understanding public trust in Australian public services across regional Australia* project are to provide the Department with a better understanding of public demand for, and trust in, regional Australian public services, and with this, recommendations for improved design and delivery of responsive public services in regional and remote Australia across multiple APS agencies. This section provides a description of the research approach which was based on three interacting components of research which, combined with progressive milestone reports, provided a comprehensive and collaborative project design (see Figure 4).
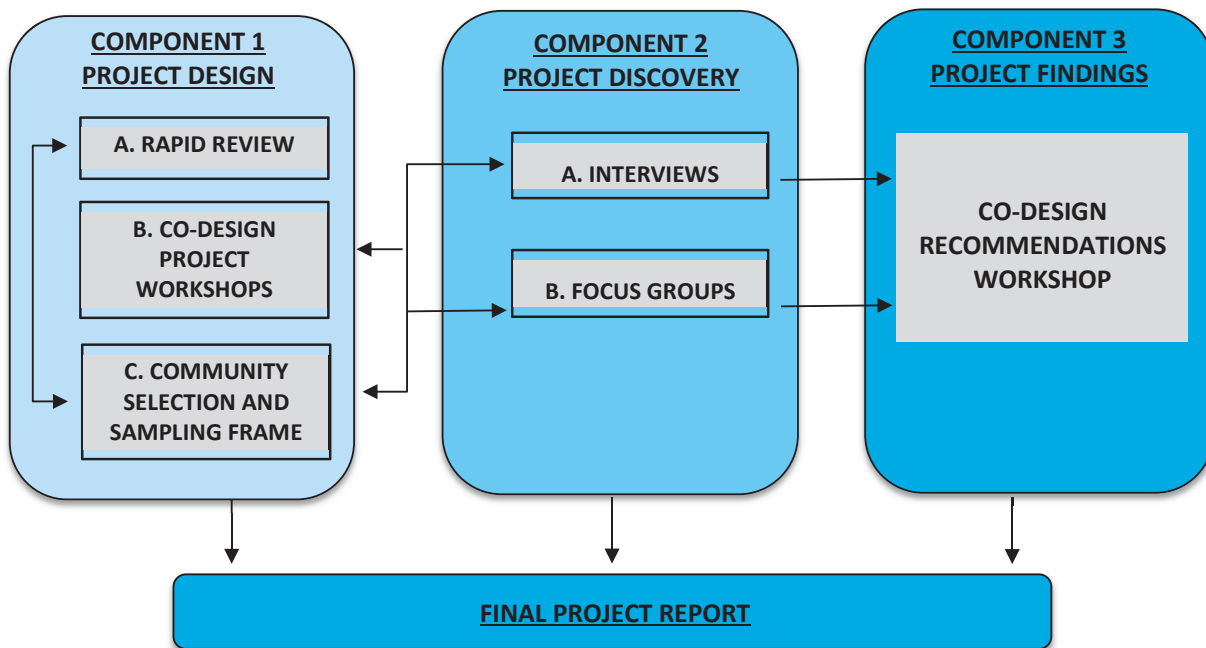
Figure 4. Research plan

COMPONENT 1: RAPID REVIEW AND COMMUNITY SELECTION

RAPID REVIEW

A rapid review of current knowledge and understanding of the demands for and trust in the delivery of Australian public services in regional and remote Australia was undertaken (provided in Appendix 1). This review included local, national and international academic and practice-based literature as well as private sector studies on trust in service delivery and uptake of public services. Synthesising materials provided by the Department and additional published works (including academic and non-academic sources), this review provided key insights into the drivers and components of trust in public service delivery, including the development of the analytical framework. This understanding of trust informed the design and implementation of the qualitative research approaches used in data collection (Component 2).

CO-DESIGN WORKSHOPS TO INFORM RESEARCH DESIGN

The project has embedded a co-design approach with the research team working with APS representatives in the design, delivery and finalisation of the project. Recognising the diversity of experience and insights across the APS, two co-design workshops were held with invited representatives from across the APS. These workshops provided an opportunity for policy, service delivery and data analysts to share insights into regional public service delivery. The strategic workshop focused on the project principles and desired outcomes, providing guidance for the research plan. The technical workshop focused on the case study selection process and relevant data availability across the APS.

SELECTION OF REGIONAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

An analysis of current quantitative data was undertaken to inform the qualitative research design, with the selection of project study communities based on a quantitative analysis of core community features. This analysis provided important insights into how and where different services are provided, and the level of trust Australians in regional communities have in general (using modelled suburb level data on general trust and trust in Federal Government, modelled using NATSEM's spatial microsimulation technique). Analysis of available data, together with qualitative insights from co-design workshops, informed case study selection and participant recruitment sample frames, enabling a focused exploration of the drivers behind demands for and trust in Australian government public services.

Once the quantitative data was collated and spatially mapped, the 'off-diagonal method' was used as an initial basis for selecting communities to study (see Tanton et al., 2016). The aim of the off-diagonal method is to 'explore the unexpected'. The off-diagonal method identifies those communities that do not have the expected result of one indicator given another (set) indicator. For example, using Figure 5 it would be expected (and hence *on-diagonal*) that those areas with a low proportion of Centrelink users (generally advantaged areas) would have a high trust in government public services (Box D). Conversely, it is expected (and hence *on-diagonal*) that those areas that have a high proportion of Centrelink users (generally disadvantaged areas) will have low levels of trust (Box C). The off-diagonals are those where the opposite happens: users have a high level of trust in public services even though they have a high proportion of Centrelink users (Box A), or low levels of trust despite a low proportion of Centrelink users (Box B).

The availability of services was also considered in the off-diagonal selection, however the services where data were available were the number of hospital beds within an 80 kilometre radius (about one hour drive in regional Australia), and the number of school age students. Both these are services provided by State/Territory governments, so the main consideration in the off-diagonal choice was number of Centrelink recipients, which was the only Federal government service provision indicator available.

The level of trust in Government services for communities was not available from the survey on citizen experience administered by PM&C, so a small area estimation method called spatial microsimulation was used to calculate small area estimates of trust in Government services. The spatial microsimulation method has been tested on a number of indicators like poverty and housing stress, and, has been published in high-ranked journals (Tanton, 2011). A full description of the method, including its application for this project and validation of the estimates of trust, is in Appendix 3.

Technical validation of this estimate showed it did not correspond well with estimates of small area generalised trust modelled using the HILDA survey; however expert evaluation of the estimates of trust in

government services suggested they were reasonable. While we would not be comfortable using the estimates for other purposes, using them to identify off-diagonal communities, along with other data, was appropriate.

			Service Availability Quintile				
			Low availability of services / high proportion of [Financial Support Service] users				*High availability of services / low proportion of [Financial Support Service] users*
			1	2	3	4	5
Trust in Australian Public Services Quintile	*Low trust*	1	C				B
		2					
		3					
	High trust	4					
		5	A				D

Figure 5. The Off-Diagonal Method

Conducting qualitative and further quantitative research in these 'unexpected' communities then allows researchers to identify what factors are associated with demand for and trust in Australian government public services. These factors can then assist policy makers in deciding which service delivery approaches are most effective in enabling service uptake and generating trust in public service delivery.

Modelled small area indicators of trust in Government services using PM&C's own data, with service availability and use was used to develop this data (see Appendix 2 for how this was calculated).

Once off-diagonal and on-diagonal communities were pinpointed, other considerations were used to finalise the community selections. Other considerations included project logistics (i.e. ensuring sufficient population to attain focus group participants) and a range of contextual factors identified collaboratively with co-design workshop participants as described in Table 1. Therefore the final communities selected might not be wholly off-diagonal (boxes A and B in Figure 5), or on-diagonal (boxes C and D in Figure 5) but rather slightly outside to enable a range of contextual variables to be considered (in the yellow range in Figure 5).

Table 1 Contextual characteristics to consider when selecting study communities

No.	Additional contextual considerations
1	Socio-demographic contexts (eg. age, gender, household, employment, education, indigenous proportion, immigration, levels of disability, etc)
2	Community populations (eg. small, medium and large communities – numbers to be defined)
3	Economic conditions: • Drought and non-drought (or other natural disasters) • Economic sector profile (eg. dominant industry and multiple-industry communities) • Boom and bust communities • Transitional communities • Various industry sectors (eg. tourism, dairy)
4	Australian government public service use • Proportion of [Financial Support Service] users • Service demands (e.g. cancer or mental health hot spots) • Mobile service visitations
6	Current/recent policy interventions and investment: • Cashless Debit Card pilot program • Regional deals • Community Development Program areas • Large scale infrastructure investment
7	Political affiliations (eg. voting, swings)
8	Remoteness classification
9	Levels of disadvantage (e.g. SEIFA and IHAD) and wealth estimates
10	Geographic differences (eg. North/South, East/West, within states where differences common)

Data to inform these additional considerations were sourced from a range of government agencies including the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (eg. Census data), PM&C (*Citizen Experience Survey*), the Department of Infrastructure, the Department of Human Services (eg. Complaints to DHS, if available) and other sources (e.g. AURIN, data.gov.au, etc). For this analysis ABS localities in regional areas were used (part of the ABS Urban Centre and Locality geography). These equate to towns in regional Australia.

A minimum of two study communities was identified for each State and Territory (excluding the ACT). To preserve privacy and minimise the risk of communities being adversely affected by their inclusion in the study, the final identity of study communities selected will only be known by the UC research team. Communities are de-identified. Figure 6 shows the indicative numbers (not locations) of community selections included in the study.
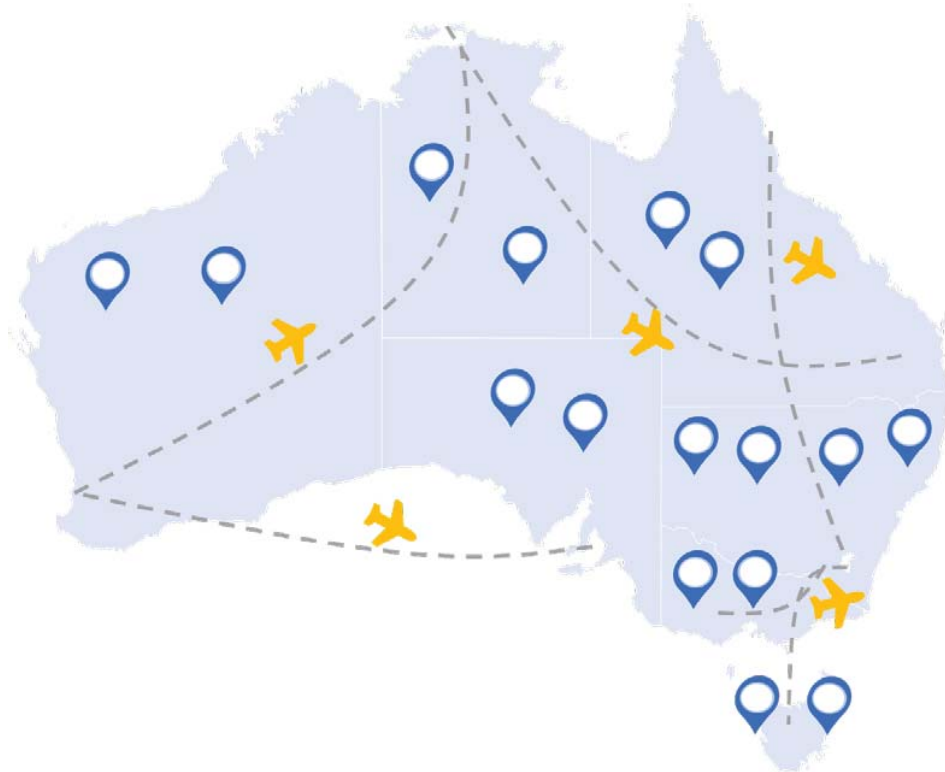
Figure 6. Map of indicative study communities

It is important to recognise that this project is designed to be an iterative approach where each component constantly feeds into each other as described in Figure 6. As such, qualitative and quantitative analyses are embedded throughout the project to inform project design, delivery and analysis. For example, where qualitative analysis identifies an issue affecting trust (eg. perceived poor access to services), this finding can be empirically verified using quantitative analysis.

COMPONENT 2: QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF REGIONAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY

In Component 2, a comprehensive understanding of citizens' demands for and trust in Australian public services was developed using a qualitative approach. Building on the existing knowledge identified in Component 1, Component 2 captured rich data that provides insights into citizens' public service experiences, service needs and perceptions of trust. While this component predominantly uses facilitated focus group discussions, co-design workshops and key informant interviews were also undertaken to capture the views and experiences of government and other service provider representatives. Table 2 provides a description of the focus groups, interviews and workshops completed as part of this study.

Table 2. Data collection completed

Type	Characteristic	Participants
Focus groups	36 focus groups were completed across Australia, including 2x metro groups and 2x 'neutral' groups (where trust and number of services available were rated as 3) as baselines.	**272**
Interviews	Interviews completed with APS leaders and frontline managers	**15**
Workshops	Co-design workshops to inform the design and data requirements/access	**27**
	Final workshop to inform recommendations	**15**
Total participants		**326**

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured key informant interviews were used to capture the views and experiences of government and other service provider representatives. Interviews were undertaken with 15 key informants, including Department and other APS Agency representatives involved in policy setting and public service delivery in regional and remote Australia, and representatives of non-government public service providers. Using an inductive approach, interviews with eight key APS thought leaders were captured prior to the co-design workshops to inform project design and delivery, including guiding focus group discussions. Five of the seven remainder interviews were undertaken with key senior service delivery representatives, and two with a frontline service delivery representative (note these were not audio-recorded). Despite considerable efforts to recruit frontline service delivery staff for interviews we were only able to talk with two. Access to frontline staff was inhibited by their managers who declined permission for staff to talk with us, and time pressures of non-government staff inhibited access.

Interviews were undertaken either face to face or over the telephone and were typically 30-60 minutes in duration and audio recorded and transcribed. One interview with a frontline delivery person was augmented by observation within the workplace.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups were undertaken to enable an in-depth exploration of citizens' drivers around demand for and trust in Australian government services. Focus group information provides a rich and nuanced understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives on Australian government services, focusing on individual experiences within their community.

Due to the diversity of communities and citizens across regional Australia, two types of focus groups were implemented – traditional and small-group focus groups. Traditional focus groups (n=27) included 6-10 people and were up to 120 minutes in duration. Groups included a broad representation of adult regional and remote citizens, including Indigenous Australians (see participant recruitment below for more details on sampling framework).

In addition, we conducted nine small-group focus groups where we deliberately sampled on three to four citizens to enable more time to delve deeper into the responses of individuals whilst still delivering a dynamic interactive discussion. Small group focus groups were 75 to 90 minutes in duration.

Focus group questions were based on exploratory themes around demands for and trust in Australian government public services. The facilitator also used follow-up 'probes' to pursue interesting lines of inquiry and further explore local community perceptions and experiences. The themes, probes and general approach to the focus groups (traditional and small) are provided in the Moderator's Guide (Appendix 4).

All focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed for analytical purposes.

Participant recruitment

Effective participant recruitment is essential for the success of any research project and requires not only active participants, but also the right participants to ensure an appropriate representation of interests and experiences. A co-developed sample frame was developed based on the outcomes of the rapid review and associated quantitative data, and guidance from the strategic and technical workshops. The sample frame was used to ensure a diversity of participants was recruited in consideration of age, gender, use of public services and other characteristics (see Appendix 5).

Participant recruitment for the focus groups was predominantly undertaken using accredited recruitment companies. Recognising the time required for participation in the focus groups, participants were provided with $100-125 incentive depending on their travel requirements. This is a standard participant fee across regional and remote focus group participation.

COMPONENT 3: CO-PRODUCTION OF RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

A workshop with up to 20 key stakeholders from the Department of PM&C, other APS Agencies, academia and interest groups was held to co-produce the research findings and recommendations. Senior APS representatives were selected from core policy and delivery agencies. In this workshop the preliminary research findings were presented and discussed, and recommendations developed utilising the experience and insights of the invited stakeholders. This workshop provided an opportunity to analyse the research findings and collaboratively develop feasible recommendations for improved APS public service delivery and collaborative public service reform.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

This project has been approved by the University of Canberra Human Research Ethics Committee [1823].

PROJECT TIMELINES

The project was undertaken from March to November 2019. Qualitative focus group data collection was completed from July to September to avoid school holiday periods. Interviews (key APS leaders) were undertaken in April/May to inform the community selection and focus group process, and frontline staff interviews were completed in September/October 2019, with participants identified mainly whilst in the communities. Additional APS senior leader interviews were undertaken in October/November 2019.

4.   FINDINGS

The following section presents citizen insights on APS service delivery in regional Australia and a small number of urban communities. Using the focus group data, this section explicitly answers the four research questions identified in the terms of reference. These are presented in five sub-sections, with key findings outlined at the beginning of each sub-section followed by a detailed description of citizens' responses.

4.1 WHAT IS THE STATE OF TRUST IN AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICES IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA?

> **KEY FINDINGS:**
> - **Context matters.** Trust in Australian public services is influenced by a range of community characteristics including socio-economic conditions, environmental conditions, community capacity, remoteness and scale.
> - **Service equity.** Service quality was perceived to be broadly similar in regional and urban communities due to the increasing availability of online platforms. Although poorer access to the internet and technological capability in regional areas is potentially limiting for some citizens.
> - **Remoteness can improve resilience.** Some remote communities studied exhibited strong resilience to service deficits, with citizens working together to overcome challenges by developing alternative pathways.

CONTEXT MATTERS

In this project focus groups were undertaken in 22 different communities, each with different economic, demographic, environmental and geographic characteristics (see Appendix 2). Despite the differences between these communities, their broad perceptions and understanding of the drivers of trust in Australian public services were similar; although, nuanced differences were observable when types of services, the nature of service delivery and access to services were considered.

Regional citizens felt their communities were different from others, that they faced different and often unique issues and hence context-based services were important. Additionally, prevailing economic conditions of communities affected their trust in government services, with those facing additional adversity, such as drought, displaying reduced trust in government due to their perceived lack of support from government:

> *"Your brother might share this with you sometimes too, that he probably feels that [Regional Centre] is quite different from the rest of the country and that they feel like their issues are quite unique. I think [Regional Centre] also feels like that. That we're just a little bit separate from the rest of [State] and things work a bit differently here to how they might work in the city." [FG26]*

> *"I think we're exposed more to the drought, which at the present time is affecting a lot of people's trust in the government. … They're giving very limited resources out, access to services" [FG6]*

For others, cost of living and employment conditions were high priorities, while a perceived "lack of humanity" in government affected peoples' trust in it to deliver policies (and with that services) that would make a positive difference in their lives. These differences between communities were identified by a small number of participants who recognised the efforts of policy and programs, but who sought more bespoke services that better suited their community needs, and which would improve their trust in services:

> *"Perhaps around here there have been some small good changes and that happens everywhere but there's a lot of lacking things that aren't really looked at, and it seems like they don't really want to listen to what people are talking about and saying within the communities and what they need. So, what's the point in trusting them? Why not just do it ourselves?" [FG34]*

This highlights the importance of context in designing and implementing services to ensure they meet the priority needs identified by the community and hence engender trust in service delivery.

SERVICE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Given the low number of focus groups undertaken in urban areas, direct comparison of service delivery perceptions is difficult and was not the intent of this research; however, some case communities were in major regional centres, which does provide some insights. In one major regional centre, the perceived difference in the quality of public service delivery between their community and remote communities was stark:

> *"I think most of the time when they deliver their services they do them reasonably well. Probably with the exception I think in rural and remote areas, I think they do appallingly badly in those areas." [FG19]*

Some regional citizens who have also experienced metropolitan service delivery did not think that being in a regional area affected service delivery outcomes, with one participant thinking it might be easier in regional areas due to parking availability, while another found it much quicker:

> *"Well, I've lived in both, I don't think it really makes any difference. Really. Still go to [Health Support Service], [Financial Support Service] here, it's just – get the same service I would have got in Sydney." [FG7]*

> *"I think it's easier to get face to face in [regional town] than it would have been in Sydney, because of the parking issues and all that sort of stuff." [FG7]*

> *"I moved from Sydney three years ago. In Sydney to go to my local [Financial Services Agency] office, it was a 10, 15 minute line up to put your name down, and then standing, not sitting because all the seats were already full, for two, three hours, to actually see somebody. The first time I went down to the local [Financial Services Agency] office here, I was in and out in 10 minutes." [FG7]*

While some participants did not feel they missed out on services, others noted that services were becoming increasingly difficult to access, which was seen as important if a user was new to the service:

> *"I don't think we miss out, I think everyone's in the same boat." [FG12]*

"I know people who find it difficult, but they're [in remote areas], out of the area, but they've said, "We can still access it." Through their internet, the communication, the technology; that's helping really." [FG35]

"We're losing out a little bit insofar as offices are being closed in regional areas … It makes it more difficult to access the services. It takes away an option, whether make a phone call, or actually go and face someone. Especially if you're accessing a service for the first time, and so it's complicated, and it's new, and you don't have a good understanding of it." [FG7]

"I think when you deal with mostly online or over the phone, you don't notice as much and coming back to that trust, you trust that the federal government will ensure the services are available nationwide regardless of location. It becomes an issue when you physically have to utilise the retail offices and that's where I think regional locations are clearly a bit difficult." [FG32]

These service delivery experiences highlight the importance of online services to enable equity of access to all citizens, and the need to continue to provide access to shopfronts across regional areas.

Here, and throughout this report very few differences were identified between the perspectives and experiences of regional and urban citizens that did not emerge from highly localised effects such as the structure of the local economy. This highlights the importance of not assuming significant attitudinal difference when treating regional and urban citizens in policy terms. While it is acknowledged that regional communities often face different challenges to urban communities and hence may require alternative service delivery systems (e.g. mobile services), in terms of service delivery regional citizens expect the same service qualities as their urban counterparts.

REMOTENESS AND RESILIENCE

Like urban citizens, regional citizens' trust in Australian public service delivery was premised on their service experiences and outcomes; however, particularly in remote communities, citizens were aware they had less access to some services (not core services like Medicare, Centrelink or ATO but services such as allied support, etc.) and hence needed to source other forms of support:

"Because it's just not there so you go find something else. … You do something else. You go somewhere else. You find an alternative." [FG36]

In addition, some remote communities highlighted the underlying community cohesion that supported alternative support options, where the community worked to support their vulnerable people whether it be through community-run transport to services in regional centres, fundraising for locally-based health equipment (although often with poor support from authorities – see Box 1), or simply looking out for local community members:

"And [regional community] is a very helping community. If I had somebody coming in and they were not complying … they really had an issue and their family had an issue, I would go out of my way to help that family within my framework, … I'd do everything possible" [FG17]

However, some citizens felt that this need for self-sufficiency was inequitable when compared with services urban citizens were perceived to receive:

> "But it shouldn't be down to the people to look after themselves out here more or less. Whereas, if you go in the city, there'll be three or four different places you can visit." [FG6]

A number of remote community focus group participants were highly entrepreneurial in their work and their approach to addressing community needs. They attributed this to the demands of living in regional communities and the need to be flexible to survive, and the desire to help:

> "Economically it's much harder than regional, so you need to be prepared to kind of flip and be diverse, have a bit of diversity and be resourceful." [FG18]

> "I actually went for a job interview this morning at the hospital, but still not enough hours in that either, so in my spare time, I volunteer for St John and we go and help people and take them to hospital." [FG18]

The self-sufficiency and associated resilience of some regional and remote communities provides opportunities for bespoke, place-based service delivery approaches. Coupled with improved genuine engagement, government support for place-based service delivery could help to improve both service delivery outcomes and, consequently, lift public trust. Such support would need to be designed around local community needs, and account for existing community capabilities including available skills and formal and informal institutional support networks (see Appendix 1).

Box 1. Community support for alternative service pathways

A few years ago now, I can't remember exactly when, but it was just when I was finishing work at the hospital, they had an empty room at the back, and at the time there was 10 dialysis patients. And the Lion's Club bought a dialysis chair and all the machinery that goes with it, and they put it in the old kitchen out the back. But the hospital didn't employ a nurse or train a nurse as a dialysis carer. And these people, some of them came in for a week or two – I don't know if you've had anything to do with dialysis, but it's very touchy. You walk around with a thing in your arm here, and you have to connect yourself up. There's no nurse checking you're okay, no nurse checking you're okay to take it off. Anyhow, so it fell through, people just didn't end up going, which is what some of us that had a bit of a say at the time said we have to – and now, they're all these people, and three of them are quite critically ill, they're end stage. And it's disgraceful. The room's still out there, and apparently the hospital sold the dialysis machine to some other place.

4.2 WHAT TRUST MEANS TO AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS AND PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

KEY FINDINGS:

Four value-based components of trust inform public trust in Australian public services:

1. **Integrity –** procedural transparency and fairness, competence, consistency of information, advice and treatment
2. **Empathy –** duty of care, respect and understanding
3. **Loyalty –** an expectation for ongoing support and guidance
4. **Delivery –** that the service promise will be met

These can be considered micro-psychological contracts between government and citizen and are keys to building service culture.

Before we could explore citizen trust in Australian public service delivery, we first needed to understand what trust means to them. From this, four interrelated components of trust were identified: a) integrity, b) empathy, c) loyalty, and d) attributes associated with delivery (or services or promises). These are not discrete components, with potential for duplication of attributes across the four (e.g. reliability is important for integrity and delivery), and considerable interaction across components (e.g. behaving with integrity is important for high quality service delivery). It is also important to understand that each of these components drive trust. If service delivery is not compliant with the trust characteristics deemed important to citizens, then trust is eroded. This could simply be a single characteristic (e.g. loyalty) or an accumulation of characteristics:

> *"Yeah I trust people whose values are reflected in what they do, and therefore someone who has a caring, and empathetic relationship, and understanding of people, and show that so that they're not primarily based by their own selfish concerns, but the needs of other people, in a genuine way." [FG7]*

Table 3 outlines the key trust attributes identified by participants, within each of the four trust components for broad notions of trust, and for trust in government service delivery. Each component is described further below.

INTEGRITY

Integrity is a broad component of trust that encompasses strong moral principles and the attributes that signify compliance with them. As described in Table 3, attributes of integrity are based on personal attributes such 'gut-instinct' and perceptions of body language, attributes closely related to service culture including values, honesty, respect, dignity, humility, trustworthiness, privacy (confidence/discretion) and actions, or governance related attributes such as genuine engagement, inclusion, transparency, accountability and communication. Across the integrity component is experience and reputation, demonstrating the importance of prior encounters of individuals and their networks in determining trust.

Table 3. Components of trust and their attributes

Trust Component	Attributes of generic trust		Attributes of trust in government services	
Integrity	Body language (eg. eye contact) Gut instinct Calm nature Honesty Reputation Truth Trustworthy Values/beliefs/principles Respect/mutual respect Not condescending Goodwill	Transparency Open (communication) Words, behaviour, actions Peace of mind Inclusion Confidence/Discretion Genuine engagement Diligence Experts in their field Humility Dignity	Common courtesy Integrity (keeping word, doing what they say they will do) Showing helpfulness and interest Previous experience Compliance with defined values Reputation (reviews and feedback) Fairness	Accountability Treated with respect Previous scandals Transparency Honesty Public value Responsibility for actions
Empathy	Friendly How they treat others Listening Empathy Fairness Kindness	Interest Engaged in conversation Compassion/caring Involvement Openness Selfless	How others are treated Personal contact Empathy Kind	Patient Compassionate and understanding Listening
Loyalty	Reliability Dependability Loyalty	Confidentiality Faithfulness Supportive	Reliability Keeping promises Equity for all Australians	
Delivery	Consistency Reputation Follow through Reliability/ What they say is what they do/ Actions match words Dependability Experience/previous actions	History of performance Accountable Impact Open discussion Support Non-judgemental Equity (fair go) Objective	Consistency Timely delivery of services Ease of service use Follow through Reliability Data retention/privacy Accessibility Personal contact Solutions Implementable policies Effective communication	Quality information Understanding regional is different to metro Knowledgeable staff Delivering public value One on one Human service Genuine conversation History (experiences) Right answer first time Competency Welcoming

A large number of focus group participants identified integrity as being an essential attribute of trust, and often identified integrity as 'following through on your word':

> "I've actually just got three words and that's "integrity, honesty and transparency. … [Integrity] means doing what you say you're going to do and following through and being true to your word. There's a lot of promising in all families and communities and governments, a lot of promises that never get ---" [FG16]

> "I've got integrity, they're keeping their word, providing what they say they're going to do, showing helpfulness and interest in whatever they're showing you." [FG6]

For some, the incongruence of service delivery (whether real or perceived) with their individual values is insurmountable, resulting in low ratings of trust for public services:

> "Yes because of my experience and family experiences. Especially with the [Health service] and stuff lately, hearing about people and the problems and simply by staff struggling to get help for their children is just disgusting. There is no other word to put it really. People who need help should get help." [FG12]

EMPATHY

Empathy was raised as being critical for trust in service delivery in all of the focus groups, and included attributes relating to the treatment of citizens including kindness, patience, listening etc. Empathy did not have to be felt personally however, with the treatment of others during service delivery also important in the determination of trust towards Australian public service delivery. Some participants noted that the local frontline staff are not empathetic:

> "Oh it's just the people that are in our office. Just some of them aren't empathic. They actually remind me of psychopaths to be quite honest. There's a couple of them, no feeling, no emotion, you could cry in front of them and you wouldn't even get a "Oh dear, sorry" you know, pat on the back. They're very cold. Like you're another number to them." [FG12]

> "My mother-in-law, and my wife looks after her and [Health service agency] just terrible. They don't see any empathy, their people don't understand the issues even though they're supposed to be empathetic. They just don't seem to care what your problems are with the aged." [FG8]

The general assumption that regional service delivery staff will be more empathetic when they know the community was found to be incorrect in at least one of the case communities:

> "No, that's not the case, definitely not the case. They're still doing their job within the framework that they've been given. So you can't - you know as much as it pisses you off, they're doing their job. Some people aren't touchy-feely emotional people and I guess we need to realise that as well." [FG12]

LOYALTY

Loyalty was a strong component of trust identified by focus group participants and directly related to notions of the Australian government's responsibility to its citizens and equity of service delivery in terms of support for all Australian citizens:

"[I have trust when] the government shows it has an obligation to you as a citizen of the country and you feel that through every service that they do provide you. … You will feel that ok that is something that they should be doing anyway and you feel like they're taking full responsibility for their obligation to take care of you as a citizen of the country." [FG3]

However, citizens believe that there is a disconnection between government views of service users as customers or clients or sometimes consumers and the view of the majority of focus group participants that they are citizens:

"Actually, that's a very good analogy. Australians are being treated as customers rather than citizens. Yes. I would say that is the point. What can we get out of you and how can we get it better, rather than, hang on, you're the citizen, you put us here, what can we do for you?" [FG22]

Some participants felt that the loyalty value is eroding, due to government not delivering on equity and a perceived decline in the government's commitment to caring for its people over recent years:

"Yeah, it's supposed to be a fair country, we're all supposed to get the same opportunities, that's what we boast about being Australian, Australian citizens, whatever, when it's in actual fact the exact opposite." [FG18]

"When I came I really [had] trust in all the government policies, I trusted. I could tell that they really care about the people. They used to put people first. … but now I not sure about that anymore to be honest." [FG17]

This notion of loyalty was also expressed by other participants, who identified that trust was 'having your back' and that the government should have the citizen's back, particularly pensioners:

"[Trust is] The knowledge that someone will have your back. So a bit like a parent does for a child. And in regard to politicians, and our government, we should be able to trust that they are looking after the people in their charge, which is us, because they're not in charge of us. They should be looking after the people in their charge and that's us." [FG15]

"Yeah, just living is more, the pensions are so limited and there's just so - you feel sorry for people who made Australia what it is, where they're being chastised by the system. I'm not looking forward to getting older in Australia anymore. You're lucky to survive." [FG18]

Correlated with issues of integrity and values, the (mis)alignment of government service actions with participant values was a strong driver of trust in overall government service delivery, with one participant concerned with the government's perceived mistreatment of vulnerable citizens which lets Australians down – a lack of loyalty:

"My personal view is that I'm happy to work and pay tax to support other people that are struggling to get work, I like to live in a country where if you can't get work you're not going

to go hungry, you're not going to go homeless. So, I would like [Financial Service Agency] to provide a really great service basically to people that need it and God forbid, if I ever end up in that position I'd like the support. So it disturbs me to think that my perception of the Australian Government is that they treat people on welfare like they are just problems that should be gotten rid of and not as humans that need help. Again, I think the individual staff members that man the phones, I think from what I've heard from friends and family they're all quite good, but it's their management, their system, their structure that just lets them down and it lets so many every day Australians down. So that's what the one's for, yeah plenty of people end up with money in their bank account at the end of the fortnight but for most people it's not enough and the headaches that go along with it, it just sounds traumatic basically." [FG14]

DELIVERY

Trust was inextricably linked to service delivery with all participants identifying that trust in Australian public service delivery is based on their delivery experience. For the delivery component of trust the attributes identified by focus group participants are typically descriptive based on service experience and associated institutional barriers (see Figure 2). Although the experiences of others within their social networks were also identified as important attributes (environmental barriers). For example, did they get an outcome (whether positive or negative) within an appropriate timeframe, was delivery transparent, was there consistency in service delivery (i.e. information, outcomes) (these attributes are considered in further detail in the following sections of the findings).

An important finding here was how participants understood and rated trust, which may contribute to understanding why regional citizens trust Australian public services less that their urban counterparts (further research is needed to verify this finding). For many regional participants there was a strong perception that trust is not implicit, that it is earned:

"I believe trust is earned. Someone needs to prove themselves of being trustworthy. And this can come about by being honest, being reliable, not breaking promises, and doing what you say you're going to do, and sticking by you." [FG31]

"I think trust is earned not given. I don't expect to trust people on face value ever. As soon as I meet somebody, I instantly never trust them until I've got reasons to trust them." [FG29]

"One thing about trust is as far as I'm concerned it's always earned. So people earn my trust and they do that by demonstrating it in an active way so that I know that I've done something with them, told them something, acted with them in a way that I've felt like they had my back and I had theirs." [FG30]

While a minority of participants were more open to granting initial trust, this could then be lost through poor experiences etc:

"I'm not saying they're perfect. I'm saying I trust them and that I have no reason to distrust them so basically, I think they do what they say they will do..." [FG14]

"I guess that comes back to the whole, you know, you're taught from a young age that you can trust those departments. So even though you might get your trust knocked down, you know you've still got some form of trust in them, given that it might not be very much but it's still there in some form." [FG5]

"I never thought "could I trust this or can't I trust this" because it's got '.gov' at the end of the website. I'm like this is the Australian Government – how could I not trust them…" [FG3]

"Well it goes back to the frustration you feel when you have to deal with them … just even the thought of calling them filled me with dread because it just took so long, so much of my time. It didn't feel worth it. So it feels like if I, if they can't deliver, why should I trust you?" [FG1]

Consistency was also raised in every focus group as an important driver of trust, as it guides expectations and when absent erodes trust:

"I think consistency's really important because you've got to know what you're going to get from someone. So if they're always the same, you know how you're going to get treated and how you're going to be responded to, so consistency's a big one.: [FG16]

"[Financial Support Service], for example, you can walk in there one day and go back eight times later and finally get it right, and yet next week you go on one day and they can get it right. [Health Support Service] the same." [FG25]

"… the services are all there, if they worked properly, the people were well trained, which they aren't because you can ring up once and ask a question, get an answer, you can ring up another day to verify it and you get a completely different answer. … Or you ring up three days in a row and get three different stories." [FG33]

Trust in government service delivery is also heavily reliant on transparency and effective and genuine communication which places the citizen at the forefront:

"Transparency, so again, it's being able to know where things are at. I originally had accountability. I changed it because accountability is one thing, saying yep we stuffed up, we didn't get you what you wanted. Doesn't necessarily put the onus on them to find me a resolution so telling me, you screwed up, still fix my problem. Transparency means at least I can see where it's at and then I'm almost giving myself the power to do something about it." [FG2]

"Communication, like adequate communication, and keeping me in the loop. Compassionate and understanding. So like thinking that they're actually kind and caring and they're doing it just for me, and they don't have another call waiting after me, or they haven't just dealt with a rude person just before me, like they genuinely care." [FG19]

Through this communication people can gain a better understanding of government services, which in itself builds trust:

"[My low trust is] probably more I don't understand what they're doing. And when I don't understand something, I don't trust them. They'll say, "You owe this because of these reasons", and I don't understand what they're talking about." [FG21]

Service outcome is an important determinant of trust, but it is not all that citizens base their trust on. How they are treated is also important:

"Experience … I'd like to be able to hang up the phone and say "Gee that was pleasant – they gave me everything I wanted to know and I can go ahead and do this now", that's the only way I'm going to increase trust in them is if they give me what I'm after and I get an end result and walk away from the phone and say that was great." [FG1]

"Just the personal satisfaction that you get with dealing with a particular department, which relates I think to customer service, how you're treated and the outcome of the service that they're providing to you. … [want] to be spoken to politely, to answer your questions clearly, and for them to give you information that you haven't got in a clear and concise manner." [FG19]

"And another thing is common courtesy. Whether or not it is a service you're just going to see, whoever's working for them, representing them, if it's as simple as going into an office, opening a door, just little things like that make it more comfortable and easier for you to trust." FG6

Follow-through was identified by the majority of participants as being an important indicator of trust, with follow-through relating to individual service delivery outcomes as well as broader social policies and programs which are often at the whims of government agendas:

"I think that there's lots of issues that they try and tackle and it's the bit here and a bit here that they try and work on. I don't trust them to tackle one issue head on and put everything behind it. I think it's gradual stuff that they change and get better, hopefully. Sometimes they get worse but so do I trust them to do everything? No, not really." [FG36]

"Exactly right, where's the story to say, "Oh look, they've actually done this for our family" you know or – there's no evidence. It's just like a ghost policy. You hear about it, but no one really knows the ins and outs of it." [FG9]

"I mean, how can you trust a Government that clearly doesn't have the people's interests. I mean, they make promises, but you never see anything actually happen. So how on earth are we supposed to trust you when time and time and time and time again, "Oh, we're going to do this, we're going to do that" but it just doesn't happen." [FG9]

These four components of trust provide an overview of what are the important attributes of trust in public service delivery – with each component representing a micro-social contract that needs to be satisfied for trust to be granted. Each and every trust component is as important as the other due to the interactions between the components and the duplication of attributes across them. As such, the design and delivery of public services needs to be mindful of all four components at all times.

4.3 BARRIERS AND ENABLERS TO TRUST IN AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICES

KEY FINDINGS:

1. **Public perceptions of trust in government services are indivisible from public perceptions of political trust.** Citizens identify politicians as the makers of policy and hence the drivers of service delivery choices. If public services are not addressing citizens' needs, or are poorly implemented due to eligibility criteria, poor resources etc – it is due to politicians.

2. **Every single experience matters for every single service.** Trust in service delivery is typically perceived as a 'whole of government' perception. If one Department provides poor service delivery, this affects the trust perceptions in other public services. However, when asked, citizens can distinguish between public services.

3. **A mix of delivery approaches is critical.** Innovations in public service delivery and associated efficiencies are appreciated (e.g. MyGov), but citizens want a choice in service delivery approaches to enable effective delivery across a range of citizen needs, capacities and access constraints.

4. **Supply-side drivers are the predominant influencers of trust in public services.** Supply-side drivers include service culture, service complexity and communications about and within service provision. Citizens' experiences are directly linked to these drivers at every stage of every service delivery received. Demand-side drivers create trust perceptions. Demand-side drivers include citizens' own experiences of service delivery, and those of their networks (and media), and the locally perceived social, economic and political factors. These experiences and the perceived local environment work together to create a trust perception which informs if and how they approach and trust public service delivery.

5. **Trust systems drive trust.** Compliance with the identified characteristics of trust drives trust perception. Where public services (or their administration) are not in compliance with those trust characteristics, citizens become more distrustful of those and other related government services (i.e. Robo-debt not compliant with some citizens values and perception of government loyalty to it citizens; data breaches increases distrust of online and liked platforms).

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT SERVICES IS INDIVISIBLE FROM POLITICAL TRUST

This research supports the existing literature and found that citizens' trust in public services is linked to their perception of trust in government. Indeed, trust in Australian public services is indivisible from trust in politics. When asked whether they equate government services with the government of the day, one participant was quick to answer *"Oh, 100%, Because that is what they are there for"*. Participants identified that it is the government who directs the policies and hence the services available, their resourcing and ultimately their implementation:

"Absolutely, it starts at the top. Like if the guy who's supposedly leading our country has filled us with lies and bullshit and deceit, you can't really trust from there down the hill, can you?" [FG18]

"So when you ask about trust in public services, it's hard not to say that it's the politicians because they're the decision makers at the end feeding it down. Eventually it does feed down, but as for the public servants delivering the services, I think that they can deliver it under the guideline and policies that they are delivering it, but they don't get to make the calls." [FG35]

"… I think our distrust of politicians … I think it feeds into our distrust of some services as well. Because that's the end point of some of what they deliver. Like [Financial Support Service] is a government service and part of the issue with that poor running of the service is how much funding they receive."[FG26]

Although one participant noted that in regional areas service implementation may be adjusted to do the right thing by the local community, despite the government of the day:

"They're still going to try and do the right thing by you. Do you know what I mean? Because we're in a regional area and there's a sense of community. It's not the city. It doesn't depend so much on the Government of the day." [FG8]

Linked to issues of integrity, some participants identified the lack of action, or follow through, of politicians as being critical in their trust of government and government services:

"If I'm looking at my trust rating, I can't trust a single word that comes out of their mouth because very rarely do we actually see them implement what they say they were going to do, simple. … Because it starts [with politicians]. It's drip fed down and that concerns me that if they're not even doing what they say, what's actually going to happen to all of these services?" [FG12]

"I kind of trust them. … But I don't totally trust them. … I just wish they'd get off their backside, and make policies, and do it. Instead of hoo-haaing." [FG23]

This distrust of politicians is a significant barrier for developing and maintaining trust, with politicians seen as a significant inhibitor of good service delivery, with one participant wishing they would leave policy and service delivery to the experts, the public servants:

"The vast majority of the senior public servants in Canberra and elsewhere in the country that are subservient to Canberra, are attempting to do the right thing. Politicians now call the shots and to the extent that people in senior administrative positions are political appointments, and they never used to be until about 15 years ago. I would say, let the managers manage." [FG29]

EVERY SINGLE EXPERIENCE MATTERS FOR EVERY SINGLE SERVICE

Given the importance of experience in determining trust, every single service delivery experience matters. Trust in government services is not limited to a single service, with a poor experience with one service potentially affecting a citizen's trust in other government services due to the need for multi-department services, which can be difficult to overcome:

> *"I just said previous experience. Once your experience of the government service is bad, it's going to probably take you seven times going back and receiving good service to actually change your opinion of that service originally." [FG6]*

> *"Because some departments when you go to, you need more than one of them to fulfil that need and it's just hard to trust people when you get knocked from say two of them and there's five there and you think what's the use of going to the other three?" [FG14]*

> *"I feel like it's hard to give a good overall rating if you've had such incredibly horrible service from even just one government service it can really taint your view on all of them because you really just sort of think of it as one. …. So when you have had such horrible dealings, it can just taint your overall trust of the whole lot." FG1*

> *"Despite having poor experiences with [services], I've also had some good experiences with the exact same agencies so it seems to me that out of every 50 people you deal with, 25 of them are right at the mark, the other 25 couldn't give a rat's ass and that's my experience so that's why its 50/50." [FG2]*

A MIX OF DELIVERY APPROACHES IS CRITICAL

Delivery approaches are important for citizens' trust in and uptake of public services. A number of delivery approaches were discussed including online, face to face, phone and 'seamless' or invisible service delivery.

Higher trust ratings were given to seamless services: "*I just gave high ratings to the ones where I don't have to deal with anyone*" [FG6], or those that were easily accessible and reliable. Those services which did not deliver in a timely manner, or at all, were given lower trust ratings, particularly when they did not follow through on promises:

> *"Just seamlessness, and invisibility. Like, the [Health Service Agency] you don't go knocking on [Health Service Agency] door to get help. Whereas going to [Financial Service Agency] is an absolute nightmare. It takes you days, and weeks, and months, back and forth." [FG7]*

> *"We are going to give you this. We are going to help you with this, and we are going to help you with that, but you've got to fill out 40 forms that we are going to then send back and say you can't have it anyway because you misspelt one word. Or you can fill out the 40 forms again." [FG12]*

Online

Online service provision was identified as an enabler of access to services, providing efficient service delivery with access as good regionally as in metro areas:

> *"The amount of services I have to interact with if I couldn't do it online, I don't know how I'd manage. I don't have time. I'm either at work or I've got three kids; not going to be going to [Financial Support Service] and all these places all the time." [FG35]*

> *"But I don't think I'm missing out because I'm living in a rural area. It's quite good. … I do as much as I can digitally, here in [regional community], that I don't think it'd be any different if I was in Sydney. I would still do it online if I could." [FG7]*

> *"Yeah, I like it, you can do it whenever you want, I'm a bit of a control freak so I do it myself and make sure it's done properly as far as I can do it. You're not relying on somebody else to fulfil their job correctly, you're not relying on how good a day they're having, or whether they'd be bothered, you haven't got to wait for ages, you can get that information as it's stated, not as somebody interprets it and then passes it on." [FG29]*

However, online service delivery relies on having reliable access to high quality internet, which is often not available in rural and regional communities making accessing services even harder. Without good internet access online services can be frustrating:

> *"It's so incredibly frustrating, having to do anything online at the moment. I don't know what everybody else's experiences are but where I am, it's a continual source of frustration and emotional energy drain." [FG 8]*

Such frustration was also aimed by many participants at the poor information available online which they feel is not designed for the users:

> *"… if you're trying to do something online, even if you've got a super reliable connection, you can spend hours wandering around in a fog because there's no transparency about – they're not trying to make it easy for people.: [FG8]*

> *"You need to have acquired the technology to do it, but you get on their websites, and I don't know who designs their systems. But you've got to be psychic to be able to follow what they want. In order to get what you need, you've got to run through this maze, it's complete bullshit." [FG29]*

While many participants identified they were comfortable with using online services, there was a considerable level of concern raised about the depersonalisation of services, and their suitability of online services for many parts of the Australian community, including those whom services are targeted for:

> *"There's huge benefits to the digital age and having information all stored somewhere. There's huge benefits to that. But it depersonalises everything. "Oh, I'll just go look online for that. Don't talk to me." [FG16]*

> *"I'm cautious about it. I like digital but it's very hard for some members of the population. There's a whole suite of people who really need services who can't access*

them. There's homeless people, there's elder people, there's a whole suite of those that I feel it completely neglects." [FG15]

"I've used it but I think there's probably benefits around it for some people and I think it's probably more people struggle with it and don't like it, especially the Aboriginal community, they don't have internet, for that kind of thing. I think it's taken away a lot of the face-to-face things too. People need to sit down and talk to families and people. It's going away from that. It's doing a lot of damage. It's all about delivery again, it's not friendly. No people skills. And these people are usually the ones who are struggling, they need services, support, even someone to listen to them talk. It's a big thing to people." [FG21]

Some participants were concerned about the potential impacts on those who cannot utilise digital services, including increasing exclusion from society and simply getting 'left behind':

"And you're already putting elderly people and keeping them in a home, it all goes online and digital, they stop having that outside interaction. It's another chip away of community. That's where the isolation comes in, if they were doing it at home." [FG15]

"One thing I do find and there's a lot of people don't have computers because they're elderly or they just don't - can't afford it or any of that, so it makes - it's a have and have not sort of thing about this information online. Not everyone is online or capable of doing it or have the facilities to do it and they're pushing everyone. … But they are getting left behind by government because everything's online." [FG18]

Online delivery platforms, such as myGov, were a popular innovation for many participants, providing an efficient and informative service, although others found it difficult and needed more support:

"I do like the myGov app, having everything available in one place. It's so easy to navigate through there. Have all the information that you've provided there. Having all the letters that I would have lost if they were paper form. They're all right there. So I think it's an excellent system, personally." [FG12]

"It's a pain in the neck. Well to start off you have to make sure your computer's doing the right thing or your phone's doing the right thing, and then you've got to sit down and dissect the words they're trying to explain to you what they want you to do. I just want someone to casually explain it to me in a language and a way that I understand. And I've got to get onto myGov and I tried one day and gave up and haven't gone back to it, but the answer is that I need to get onto it and I just don't have the mental energy to deal with it, but I desperately need to do it and I'm thinking what am I going to do? Because nobody at [Financial Support Service] going to help me do anything." [FG14]

Innovation in service delivery over recent years was seen positively by some participants, with many participants observing the efficiency of the service, no matter the time of day, although a small proportion of citizens were less favourable about current online systems:

"I can see changes within these organisations, the ease of using, being online for instance. To me, that's a positive. I do not want to be on the phone with somebody. I

want to upload my bill, I want to see the money go into my account, I want to be able to look at my records." [FG15]

"I like it, yeah. They never close, if you want to go and use a [Financial Support Service] app it's always there when the office closes so I can look up anything I want anytime of the day, just because it's always there, whereas office is closed." [FG15]

"Because every single service was honestly made by a completely different mob, because none of them have got any kind of cohesiveness in how they look, how they function. … And if it's annoying for me, anyone in the older generation is going to find it a nightmare, because as soon as you've learnt one, you try to use another service, you've got to relearn the language. And then you have to do that two or three times, depending on how many services you want to use." [FG31]

Direct contact approaches

Face to face and phone delivery approaches remain critical to effective service delivery as they enable citizens support for more complex concerns that cannot be addressed via online approaches, and engender more trust:

"I would trust a person face to face more generally because you can just get clarification on the spot. Sometimes they don't have the answers that you need but I'm always going to feel a lot more confident having walked away from face to face interaction where I can ask them all the questions I had in the moment as opposed to online where I'm not always sure I've done the right thing and there is no way to get any sort of clarification so for me personally yeah face to face, absolutely." [FG1]

"Dealing with them in person is so much better than over the phone or via email because you get that face value. Then that comes back to the trust. I'm going to trust someone a lot more face-to-face." [FG5]

However, these services are not without limitations, with the wait times, inconsistent messaging, and lack of personable service delivery detracting from the service experience, and hence trust in service delivery:

"…if [phone service] was delivered in a timely manner I would be more than happy. I would trust it just as much as I'd trust someone [face to face]." [FG9]

"I guess you could say– personable. You could make the service more personable for me, that's what would gain my trust a bit more…. to not feel like you're just, oh yes, resident number 3,482" FG9]

"It just seems like, "Oh no, I've got to make a phone call. Oh, I think I'd rather go to jail, than make this phone call." … It's about the same length as a jail sentence."[FG9]

"It's just like a packed lunch and a water bag and you bring your camel just in case because it could be the rest of your life, it's just – it's awful." [FG9]

In those communities facing significant community and economic development challenges (eg. drought, closure of industries), citizens are needing more timely access to services, and typically via face to face approaches to enable efficiencies and provide a more empathetic service:

"They're giving very limited resources out, access to services – I guess we've got a lot of people coming in to where we work to access drought funding, and to have to tell them that we don't look after that because we're a state government agency, here's the federal government agency's contact details, "I don't want that. I want somebody to talk to right here, right now in this office." [FG6]

"Why can't we have the government services bus that comes here once every two months and sits in [regional town] for a week and then you can have everybody go and do their accesses and what they can't do online or whatever accesses, they're still seeing somebody face to face." [FG6]

For some participants, trust was driven by personal interactions, highlighting the need for face to face service delivery options, particularly for complex cases, vulnerable people and those uncertain with online platforms:

"Maybe I'm old fashioned but I don't think there's any substitute for sitting in front of a guy … Holding your book talking to him asking him questions. "Why can I do this, why can't I do that? What can I pay, what can't I pay?" I just don't think there's any substitute for that." [FG34]

"Like you said, the trust, you have more trust sometimes when you're face-to-face, having the word and looking at someone and having the conversation, you feel like you're being heard more or understood more versus just inputting something into a website." [FG15]

For one person, poor service quality has resulted in face-to-face becoming the last resort, only an option after other delivery methods had failed:

"I think from my experience, going into the office, like [Financial support service] office, is now like a last resort if you can't get any actual answers over the phone. People can't just hang up on you when they're standing in front of you, so I feel like the [Financial Support Service] service is a last resort. Yeah. The experience is so poor that people would rather sit on the phone for an hour trying to deal with something, and then if that doesn't succeed, then they go into the office but that's how bad it can get. It's a last resort." [FG20]

However, access to face to face services is becoming more difficult, especially with the ongoing push to use online service delivery platforms:

"I'm quite happy to walk into somewhere and go face-to-face with somebody, but at the end of the day, those somebodies don't exist anymore." [FG17]

"I prefer being able to speak to somebody in person. I'm sick of getting told, "You know you can do this online." If I wanted to do it online I would have done it, I wouldn't have came in here." [FG22]

Mobile services are an important form of face-to-face delivery in remote communities, but they are not capable of providing the full array of services needed in remote communities, and suffer from technical difficulties like the residents:

"I think I would strongly agree that we in [regional centre] think that there are problems in terms of accessing services, but it's much worse if you're outside of [regional centre] for example, much, much worse in terms of being able to access federal government services. … when I used to go round the communities and that, like [Financial Support Services] would come in twice a week, sometimes. Someone would drive in, set up their little office, and that would be it. Then they'd leave, and they'd come back in a couple of days, because they go round everywhere else. And it is quite hard, especially if the computer system goes down, they can't do anything. And even health services, a lot of communities have good clinics, but they don't have the mental health support as well, they need. And that's all federal stuff." [FG19]

Similarly, phone services offer some level of interaction, and online chat functions can help with service outcomes:

"The phone is similar to walking in and actually talking to the person and they can explain things to you and you can sort of get a two-way conversation going. Whereas you're online, you only have to look at the screen." [FG30]

"There's also the fact that a lot of websites now have the option of a live chat which I've used quite often. … Mind you I don't type very fast, but I can make them wait for me which they have to and I've resolved quite a few things doing that. It is another way of actually having some sort of human interaction and not just having to follow a form." [FG30]

A range of delivery approaches is needed

Overwhelmingly, participants observed the need to provide public services using a variety of delivery approaches, and to stop forcing people to use digital options only:

"I think one of the problems is they give you this option called online and they don't give you any other options, you've got to do it online. When people go to [Financial Support Service] to apply for [financial support] and they say, "No, you've got to do it online." Now, those people they haven't got a computer, they're too old, don't know how to use a computer and they've got to do it online." [FG34]

"One is that computers try to fit you all into square little boxes. Quite often that doesn't really work when you're trying to get information. You need a much broader range of discussion than just filling in a box or ticking a box. … that's why I think computerised systems are fine to give you a bit of an intro into where you might be going, but sometimes you then need to actually talk to a person who knows about it to give you that fine flourish, to actually get you to the point you need to be." [FG19]

"Well, I really like that I can use [online] at any time, that's convenient to me. I like to be able to be informed about everything that I can, so having all the information available is

good. But I would like to see a more human element as well, if you are struggling, there needs to be an option for you to be able to contact someone who will help you, because a lot of times if it's available online, there's no human component to it, so there doesn't seem to be a lot of in between." [FG28]

"No I was just going to say, if you could have like the array of services, like when you really need to speak to someone over the phone with more complex matters you really do need that agent to be able to speak to. But when you've got those really quick questions that could be resolved literally in 30 seconds if you could just ask someone, eg. through a live chat service, it's great. So this is what I'm saying like you can reduce the call times for people that really need to speak to someone by offering an array of different service channels to get through." [FG32]

SUPPLY-SIDE AND DEMAND SIDE DRIVERS OF TRUST

As identified in Section 2 there are supply-side and demand-side drivers of trust which help understanding of the impact of the various trust attributes. Citizens' experiences are directly linked to these drivers at every stage of every service delivery received. Demand-side drivers create trust perceptions and include citizens' own experiences of service delivery, experiences of their networks (and media), and the local social, economic and political factors. Supply-side drivers include service culture, service complexity and communications about and within service provision.

Demand-side factors

Personal experience, and the experience of others, whether it be friends, family, or strangers, have a significant influence on trust ratings. While some participants were only willing to base trust on their personal experiences, others were also informed by the experience of others although not always proud of this:

"Well they were really, at the times that I needed them, they were really hot on what I wanted and they backed off when I wanted them to, and it was fantastic. I can't fault them. That's just my experience." [FG12]

"Well for me, my own experience has been fairly positive, but the reason I didn't give it higher is because you hear all these horror stories in the media." [FG7]

"If you've had a problem previously with them, you're less inclined to accept what they tell you next time and trust that it's correct. … You go in with your back up a little bit and you're very cautious." [FG25]

"I've had no dealings with [Financial Support Service], but it's still ranked my lowest just because of these terrible stories I hear. I'm pretty disappointed in myself that I'm being so easily influenced by other people's stories while I've got no dealings with them." [FG8]

One potential influencer is the media with many participants noting that their trust in government services has declined over recent years due to experiences shared by their networks and the media: *"I don't know, probably declined hearing from other people's opinions and reading what you see online and on the news*

and other people's stories." [FG14]. Although participants were not always influenced by media with one noting "Am I the only one that totally doesn't trust any of the info we get? I don't at all. I feel like the media is a manipulator." [FG8].

Study participants were asked to re-evaluate their overall trust rating in Australian government service delivery at the end of the focus group. While many kept their rating the same, others increased or decreased their rating based on their reflections of what they had learnt from the group discussions:

> "Just some of them were from people's experiences, from the good experiences obviously and things that I don't – services that I have never had to deal with." [FG8]

> "Because I've just lost all respect for most of the Departments from what I've heard from everybody." [FG8]

For one participant, the rating was increased due to their perception of fairness in service delivery, after she found that metropolitan citizens have similar service delivery experiences:

> "Just from hearing some of the stories and the fact that people in the big cities, in the cities, the other side of the mountains there, hearing that they have similar difficulties to us. But the big thing here is the tyranny of distance of course. But we're still pretty much able to get exactly what they've got. And if they're having trouble, if they have trouble in the cities, then it's really a fault of government. It's a fault of delivery or a problem with delivery." [FG6]

While for another, the overall rating decreased due to the lack of congruence with their values and the perceived lack of loyalty of the government to the citizenry:

> "Yeah, it comes down to I hate knowing that there's people that genuinely need help that can't get it." [FG14]

Perceptions of service experience and with that trust in service delivery is also heavily influenced by service delivery outcomes, with some participants identifying that bad experiences may be overlooked as the serviced was ultimately delivered, and in some cases delivered above expectations (see Box 2):

> "Because I trust that they will deliver it and I've had bad experience with the government but at the end of the day, they still deliver even if you have to scream and yell. So I can't say, go down and say "No, because I've had a bad experience" because I still, I had to jump through hoops, but I still got what they delivered at the end of the day." [FG26]

Others expressed their long-standing dismay at government performance, and the impact of highly publicised service delivery scandals, highlighting the difficulty in increasing trust in Australian public services:

> "Only up to about two because I still think they need a really good kick in the butt to start looking after their own people. They'll need to really take a step up and really step up to the plate because I think they really really really over the last probably 10 years have let us down." [FG9]

> "[I gave a zero out of 10], = I've got one word and that is Robo-debt. So that's to [Financial Services Agency]. [No I did not receive a Robo-debt], but the stories I hear, the stories I read on the net, it just absolutely sickens me, it really does …" [FG14]

Box 2. Trust is based on personal experience of support

My partner had a business years ago, before I met him. The business went bankrupt on dodgy advice from his accountant. He dodged up some of the books. The business went downhill, also on advice from the accountant. He didn't declare bankruptcy. He just closed the business. Historically, 12 years later, we're still going through those books with the [Financial Support Service]. They haven't audited him. They're working with – I'd like them to audit him. I'd like to just hand it all over to them, but they're there, they're supportive, they're helpful. They've been so informative. Every time I've rang them, the phone has been answered quickly. It's a real person to talk to. They see what they can do to help you. They will actually go looking for things and solutions for you and they'll explain it in layman's terms. And so, I find there's a lot of trust there…" [FG8]

Trust in service delivery is highly influenced by personal experiences, with participants expressing a frustration at the lack of professional and timely service provision which can have significant personal ramifications including the suspension of payments or in some circumstances the choice to not use those services at all:

> *"…there's a different person [Finance Services Agency Office] there every four weeks because they all quit, it must be a terrible job – and he said, "I'll ring you." I said, "Okay." So he didn't ring me, the next thing, I get a text message, 'Your payment has been suspended.' Oh, you can't ring them because the [regional town] office does [regional towns] and everywhere else, there's no one ever in the office, so you've got to just keep ringing each day until someone actually answers the phone, "Oh, sorry, that's our fault. We'll fix that for you." And then, two days later you're suspended again. It's almost insane…" [FG6]*

> *"I had the same experience when I was working in [location 2 hour drive away]. … [I] got a message one day saying that I had an appointment. I rang them up and told them [I was working], and they said this is whatever appointment, this is one you have to attend. And I'm like, what, so I'm supposed to jump in the car, miss tomorrow's work, come back to [regional town] so I can report and say yes, everything's good, yes, work's good, yep, sweet, I just missed a day for you. … I ended up getting my payments cut off and I just stayed off [Finance Service] up until I finished doing that job up there. It was just easier for me not to mess around. Just work and do my thing." [FG6]*

Supply-side factors

A number of supply-side factors were raised as barriers to trust in service delivery, particularly issues associated with delays in receiving services, administrative processes and errors, service consistency, complexity and access and challenges of cross-departmental services

Many participants commented on the lengthy delays of processing claims from a number of services, each with significant detrimental impacts on individuals and their families, with such experiences eroding trust in public service delivery as explained by one participant who had to wait over six months to receive financial support:

"I mean it's a huge emotional rollercoaster to, one, wanting to kill my husband, to – feeling like I wanted to, not going to obviously – and the stress it's put on our family, my kids, my daughter – I'm getting a bit emotional – my daughter has had to lend us money from working to get us through. And she's 16, she shouldn't have that responsibility. I mean they understand what we're going through and obviously you're going through that sort of stuff too, but you're told you can access these things to make things easier and it doesn't make it easier." [FG10]

For others, the impact of continual delays in processing is overwhelming, as shared by one participant who was struggling with three children with special needs (see also Box 3):

"Exactly one year ago, I was in [regional centre] because I had [a lot of issues to deal with]. Due to the fact that 3 kids with special needs, has taken quite a toll on me. My husband being a transport operator is often gone for 3 months at a time, and getting knocked back from service after service because they just don't want to help you, and you have kids [not getting on with each other] and attacking me and everything else and pretty much I'm not getting any help for me. I just couldn't deal with it anymore [and I had to get help]. …." [FG4]

Other participants expressed the frustrations of ongoing administrative processes and errors which had a substantial personal impact:

"Now I got cut off probably at least eight times during the year for not reporting who I'd gone to jobs for, when the lady there, who's just lovely, told me not to bother coming in for the appointments because I was sending her all my payslips and she knew I was working, but if she didn't put into the computer that I'd gone for jobs, it'd cut me off. And I kept getting these letters saying that I'm getting cut off something that I wasn't getting paid anyway. It was distressing. I'm so glad it's over. … [it made me feel] so embarrassed, upset, frustrated, just terrible. On the verge of tears sometimes because some of the people that you talk to on the telephone after you've been on there for 45, 50 minutes, talk to you as if it's coming out of their pocket. It's very embarrassing that you have to disclose so much personal information to just get frustrated and get nothing anyway." [FG21]

"But the number of mistakes that were made, yeah, at various times and missed - yeah just wrong payments, wrong assessments, like yeah, even my interpersonal dealings with some of the staff at [Financial Support Service] was difficult. And I think to myself, well I've got a tertiary degree and I consider my interpersonal skills quite good, imagine how hard this is for some others in our community." [FG26]

"… third time used to be the charm for putting in the forms because they use to lose them at least twice before they'd record them. You would have to provide them at least three times and when you lived away from the office that was difficult to get there and do those sorts of things." [FG30]

Box 3. Two years to receive outcome of application

My husband chose to apply for Disability Pension and we were waiting for how long it's going to take them to make a decision, and it took them probably close to two years and we're just like, "What is he supposed to do in the two years it's taken you to make the decisions?" You've sent me the paperwork and said, I've got two weeks to get all his doctor's reports, all this, everything you wanted, and two weeks to get it all, if I can, because a lot of it's specialists reports that you've got to get from the specialist, and if you do manage to get it all in that two weeks and they take it, you go, "Good, now they're going to make a decision maybe in two to four weeks." No, two years, and you have to be on them and on them and ringing them going, "What's happening, what's happening?" And then looking at and go every different person's looking at it and going, "Oh yeah, we can see that you've made it on such and such date," and I'm like, yeah and asked about it and he needs money, he can't live on Newstart while he's waiting for you to decide whether you're going to give him a Disability Pension or not. He's not well enough to work so we're in limbo here.

Why do I have to get everything together within two weeks and be forced to this deadline when these people aren't? They've got your life in their hands of whether or not you're going to be having money, being able to afford the essential services, and you're waiting all this time and the stress of getting it all together only for them to say, "Oh yeah, you don't get it," and you're forced back into part-time work, even though he's not well enough to work. [FG34]

Many focus group participants commented on the negative impacts associated with the complexity of service delivery. Impacts included loss of income and/or savings and for some negative wellbeing. For some, these impacts were exacerbated by the vulnerability they were facing due to unexpected life events (i.e. poor health, death in the family), highlighting the importance of efficient and effective service delivery (see Box 4).

A number of participants expressed how the complexity of service delivery eroded their trust in government, and that the government needed to provide services more easily to improve trust:

"This is where a lot of my distrust comes from for the Government, is because I actually think they make it incredibly hard so that less people do it." [FG8]

"Maybe just provide what they say they're going to provide. Instead of making it hard for people to get what they want, things that they need, not necessarily want, but the things that they need to survive should be just okay, read this, fill this out, do this, there's your payment. It's done and dusted. And these are the rules that go with it. This is what you have to do to keep this payment. Whether it goes on the age of your kids or whatever it is. I don't think we do enough of that." [FG12]

Box 4. Impacts of complexity of service delivery

I find a lot of these agencies, the amount of paperwork that you have to do to get what you need is really, really difficult. Just for an example, we lost two years and most of our savings trying to get my husband onto a disability pension because of the amount of paperwork involved and because there was not a social worker available to give us a hand. Now I've got a higher education, I found it difficult, so then you get the low socio-economic people that haven't got that level of education, and there's a lot of people missing out because they can't fill those forms in. And there's no-one to help them, so then they become worse off, which then contributes to childhood crime because they can't get what they need to get to make their life even halfway acceptable for themselves.

[Complexity was increased] because we owned our own business and then we had to put all that in and then we got all this paperwork in which all took time, "Oh, but we need this," and they would then throw another whole raft of forms at us. So consequently what we've worked our entire life for, we lost. So we had to use what we had and, to top it off, my husband had cancer as well so he was back and forth to Perth. So we had a really rough time, but we managed; okay? We're still managing, but there are people, if they can't fill those forms in, it's too hard and it's put off to the side and that concerns me that they don't have people that can assist and get stuff fast-tracked for them.

I spent most of my time in [Financial services office] in tears, but it didn't matter; you still had to fill forms out. Go home and fill them out. And you get a pat on the back and, "Are you all right, darling?" but extremely, extremely stressful time. [FG18]

The complexity of information is compounded by the lack of linkage between government departments, duplicating compliance requirements and making access to eligible services harder, with participants often talking about the need for linked services to trigger alerts and with that help to reduce administration, non-compliance issues and/or prompt advice on other relevant services available:

> "…each department doesn't follow through with the next department. You deal with one person, that is the focus. They won't read the notes, they won't do this. You've got to supply huge amounts of stuff over and over and over again. … Yes, I'm very lucky and we were very lucky that we have the facilities and the access that we do. But they make it so damn hard to access some of them, so damn hard." [FG10]

> "It would be nice if all the services were linked and some things would trigger other, at least alerts in other systems…" [FG12]

> "Yeah it seems as though the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing with all the different departments. And you would think that somewhere along the way, somebody would have put some sort of centralised computer system in place or something." [FG32]

For others, the inflexible duplication of information provisions is demanding and stressful, eroding trust in government service delivery:

> "I had to start the process from scratch again. Doesn't matter that they've got everything that they require on file; you have to start from scratch and provide everything all over

*again. So I only did that once and I'm not doing it again after that, so I just kept on pushing
forward, but it was hard work. It was stressful, it was dreadful." [FG17]*

For those going through significant adversity, this duplication of information provision and demands for
more and more information has significant personal impact and affects perceptions of trust for many years
as outlined in Box 5.

Transparency and the associated governance of decision-making was raised by some participants as being
important and problematic, with too little recording of decisions which results in negative impacts on the
citizen if the decision is changed:

*"And you say, oh I've done the thing on your advice, well they're never going to put anything
down in writing so they can screw you over, even by saying, we told you the wrong thing,
bad luck, you're in trouble." [FG18]*

*"I do like to have some kind of record. I have a feeling sometimes when you talk to
somebody you just talk but it just stays there it doesn't go unless they take notes and they
take records of it, there is no evidence for me. With online things I'm actually trying to
evade where there's no record because I like to have records so I can say, "This is what
happened, or we discussed."" [FG22]*

The complexity of service delivery is not only about the forms and processes, but also the quality of
information provided and the information expectations of citizens, with some participants anxious about
having to access services due to the information requirements, with one describing it as like 'going to war':

*"[Don't understand information] Because it's in jibber jabber. It's not plain English, that's right.
And to these days, a lot of people do not know how to read properly." [FG14]"*

*"I get anxiety just even contemplating it and then thinking how much time am I going to have
to set aside and when I finally get to the front of the queue and I can speak to someone on the
phone, am I even going to understand what they're telling me? Like I prefer to have my partner
with me and for him to be able to interact as well because sometimes you're even getting the
jargon on the phone or they're demanding information of you that I didn't know I was
supposed to have and you feel like you've wasted everyone's time and yeah the anxiety of it
can just sometimes be totally [overwhelming], I won't even do it." FG1*

*"I always feel like ([Financial Support Service]) I always go in armed with too much information
… I always make sure I've got too much with me just to make sure they don't send me back
home. So it's like getting ready for war. it's sad – it shouldn't be that way. Like we should all be
like just giving up." FG1*

Box 5. Impact of demands for information

Yeah, it was back in 2002, it's a little bit more than five years. My partner back then became a paraplegic and nine months before he died, yeah and you know, we didn't expect him to last nine months, well he was a fighter. It was cancer and I went through all the systems, disability and all the rest of it and I tell you what, I had a hell of a time with everything to do with any government assistance, like [Financial Support Service], hospitals, everything. It's interesting because when you talk to people who go through the same sort of situation, not so much as a paraplegic and that but someone's died, you still hear the same horror stories where the whole system doesn't seem to work totally 100 per cent with you and you've got to fight all the way. I know when I had to get [Financial Support Service], because all of a sudden we go from two wages down to one and his superannuation took nine months, it eventually came through a day after he'd passed away, so nine months to get this superannuation through. Then we had to prove everything that he was going to die. The government agencies just, it's a roller coast ride, you've got to prove and then you've got to prove and then you've got to prove and then you've got to prove again.

I tell you what, it was a total, total joke in the end. This is Australia, we're meant to be the lucky country and our medical system and our government system is meant to be there to help you when times are tough and you can't - change, that sort of thing. But I lost a lot of faith in our system.

I was in Albany at the time and I tell you what, you don't want to be in a country town when the shit hits the fan because the system doesn't work with you. It's all about city people, no matter what, more so than country people. If you're in a country town, you literally get told, well you decided to live there, you suffer the consequences and you get that in so many things out there, I find, that if shit hits the fan.

Nothing's changed. We were just treated like lepers by the whole system, I had to prove myself time and time again. [FG18]

The experienced difficulties in accessing services was frequently raised as an influence on trust perceptions:

> *"So they're like, we have all of these options for you but your ability to access them is made quite difficult so that's just really quite frustrating and makes it quite hard for those who struggle to jump through the hoops and run through the maze to just get to a service that's there for them and in terms of delivery" [FG1]*

Access issues include challenges with timely service provision at service shopfronts or on the phone, capacity of citizens to use services due to literacy challenges and/or poor information provision, adequate access to internet or transport infrastructure.

A common barrier to trust was perceived inadequate service provisions, with long wait times and poor-quality services resulting in low trust ratings:

> *"But then like I went into [Financial Support Service] in March this year, and you're like there's only about five people in there, and there's 100 people waiting to see five people. Like I remember when I was 18 and that, you'd go into [Financial Support Service], there'd be people, and they'd talk to you, and you'd get through it. Now it's like if you don't do your online form,*

they don't want to talk to you. … But yeah, information's not there like it used to be, I believe."
[FG19]

"I don't know if it's all mixed together but it's like when you're on one line to someone and they
don't know what they're talking about, then they put you onto another line of somebody else,
and then they put you on to somebody else and "Oh we don't know what's going, we'll put you
back to this one". It's happened to me like six times in one day and in the end I cracked the
shits. And I said "I've been on this phone for four hours and you can't do this for me" and in the
end they sort it." [FG26]

"… time is money for every individual, not just the Government." [FG8]

Although several participants shared their positive experiences with Australian government public service
delivery as well:

"You know, I'm listening to all this, and you must be doing something wrong. … Because I go to
[Financial Support Service], I'll walk in there, I get help immediately. I'm on the phone – I'm on
the phone maybe 10 minutes to [Financial Support Service] and I'm answered. I go to the
doctor without an appointment, I'm in." [FG33]

"Everybody's saying how bad [Financial Support Service] is. I've never had that problem. Every
time I've put in for a claim or gone in there or done it online even, I can do it the day that it's
due and it's done." [FG5]

Some participants noted that, although services were often hard to access, once you were in the system it
was reliable and hence they had high trust in the service delivery, although others felt that the difficulty to
access services was unduly affecting those who were already stressed and therefore had a low level of trust
on government service delivery:

"I know there's a lot of hoops you have to jump through, but generally once you get there,
you get what you're entitled to. So I've had that safety net thing where I was on my own
and I was only working one day a week, so I did get that support. It did take a while to get
through it, but I got the support in the end. And so yeah, I've had really good experiences. So
far I just think in some ways, things could be done better." [FG12]

"We've got a system that isn't helping people that need to be helped by [Financial service
agency] and people are screaming out and the government's ignoring that. … The [Health
Service] is another thing that has been created but like [participant] said, you've got to get
through all the hoops first before it's even going to be beneficial and that takes a lot of time
and sometimes if people don't have time, they're lives are already stressful enough as it is."
[FG12]

The capacity of citizens to effectively access services was raised as a concern in remote communities. Poor
awareness of service availability, low levels of literacy, coupled with complexity of service delivery,
diminished the capacity of vulnerable citizens to access services, despite their need and eligibility:

"… my thinking was that for the services where people know how to use the services, they
can be really good if you can get through the paperwork and all the bureaucracy, but the
majority of my [remote and vulnerable] clientele would not have a clue as to what these

services are, what they do, how to fill out a piece of paper … looking at [Community] as a whole, I would say that the majority of people in [Community] wouldn't even know half these agencies, or what they do." [FG17]

Perceived complexity of services is heightened by the poor local service quality, poor local provision of information and lengthy forms (see also Box 6):

"There are times where I use the digital because I know that the people delivering the services don't have the knowledge of where I need to go to, but then I have a problem because I get onto the site and then I can't find what I need, so then that becomes extremely difficult again. … And then you finally find what you need and it starts spitting out 20 sheets of paper." {FG17}

Box 6. Poor forms result in poor service delivery

My parents are dairy farmers in [State], fairly computer literate, we were sort of caught up in the [Dairy] issue, we were long time suppliers and it put some pressure on us, they had a financial counsellor that was appointed to them, I think all suppliers got that. In the end I drove six hours home to sit at the kitchen table, we took up the entire kitchen table with forms, we had to draw a map and mum's, she can work these things out, and she said, "I give up". So I took a new born baby with me, that's where we were at. So one of the big problems was, I suppose it's farming in general, you are sort of asset rich, cash poor, and so much money was caught up in Murray Goulburn shares that we're not going to be honoured because the company going to fold, we worked through all the paperwork we got to the last point that said, "Do you have shares?" Yes. You're ineligible.

We were like but it's shares in the company that has fallen over. And that was it. I could not believe it. It was incredible. It was incredible, … we're trying to do everything but the government services are very similar, it is so incredibly difficult. You're talking about people that don't necessarily have, it could be satellite internet, it's patchy, really rural. You're potentially - well it's a two-hour round trip for my parents to go to any government service and we're in [State], [State is] fairly compact compared to the whole Eastern seaboard and, they are just like - well why worry? Not being down that path before, there's a fair bit of pride involved, and they are just like "yeah, we'll sort it ourselves". Oh gosh, I think there was two people in the end, and I'm talking Murray Goulburn suppliers, not two people they knew, and you're just like, why even float it? You've clearly not worked out start to finish yourselves, why expect people to do that for you? It was the most bizarre experience. [FG34]

Some participants felt that the level of complexity was a deliberate ploy to reduce service uptake:

"Generally I think, they don't want to hand out any money, so they're going to put a whole bunch of barriers to get in the way of doing that so you have to climb six different walls to get their little hand out." [FG31]

Participants from a number of communities identified the lack of personnel in government offices as an impediment to service delivery due to the association delays in receiving a service:

> *"There can be four or five of them in there all sitting at their desks, but only one person is seeing people. And then she'll pack up and go to lunch and you all sit there for an hour until she comes back. I've been in there for three hours plus." [FG6]*

Similarly, the lack of consistency in the quality of service provision associated with perceived poor training of frontline staff was identified as eroding trust, although at other times they received a high-quality service:

> *"Sometimes you can get lost, you are after something, and you get passed around like a football. … And you wait on the phone forever and ever. … Then you get onto someone who doesn't really understand what you're talking about. It's frustrating. … [But] in fairness, other times I've rung up and I've got a beauty. Really helpful the whole way through. It's just the consistency I guess." [FG7]*

> *"As I said, you deal with one person, but they don't read the notes, or they don't – each person you deal with says something different. It's not a uniform of information. It's like people are on the phone and they just tell you what they feel to tell you at that particular time, even if it's incorrect. And that's really confusing and that undermines the trust and all that in the government's services and things." [FG10]*

> *"Because sometimes you do have a good experience. Sometimes you have a person that actually goes that extra mile and you feel like they're connecting and know what you're going through and you might sometimes go to the place, you feel like you could kiss them … you just finally get the one person that you can just kiss them because they're actually human. They listen to you as a person not just as another number …" [FG4]*

The treatment of clients from service delivery staff was also identified by some service users as being detrimental, where citizens felt as though they, and others, were looked down on by service delivery staff:

> *"…when I had a few issues with jobs not being secure, I actually deliberately did not go for [Financial Support Service] payments because I felt like I was being treated like a second-rate citizen if I wanted their assistance. Even though I was working casually, they made me sit in a room to work out how to conduct myself at a job interview, and I was made out to be an absolute idiot." [FG8]*

> *"It's like you're a piece of dirt. They make you feel that they don't like you going there, to get the service." [FG14]*

> *"Half the time they don't really want to help you. They just want to get in and get out. … [This makes me feel] tired and drained and depressed and a lot of the time you do feel like giving up and you never get an answer or you get shoved around or yeah, just - it does, it depresses people and honestly I wonder a lot of younger people are actually going, stuff this. I can't deal with this anymore. Because it is, it's depressing." [FG30]*

One participant noted the importance of the service delivery for people's lives, and hence the need for frontline staff to recognise they work in community services and do their best at all times:

> *"It's still your personal decision and your deliberate reaction to a situation, you are in control of what you do, if you choose to be a dick and not nice to people well … Do your job*

then that's what's given. Not doing the best you could do, if you are in the community service you need to be prepared to serve the community. Whether they're nice, whether they're not, whether your boss is there for you, whether they're not, you need to find mechanisms in everything to be able to do your job properly otherwise you're letting other people down and it can mean someone doesn't get paid, someone's kids get taken off them, someone doesn't end up going to hospital and dies. It's serious." [FG29]

Although other participants acknowledged that this treatment may be due to the pressures of the job and the ongoing reduction of resources:

"A lot of it's the way you're treated and spoken to, especially back at [Financial Support Service] again. But that's – probably can't blame them. If I worked there, I'd probably talk like that too. And that comes back to probably not so much the customer but the amount of clients they've got to deal with every day." [FG6]

"I've dealt with them in the past which they eventually got what I wanted, but it just took so long. And I understand that their work load's doubled, their resources have been cut and the staffing has been cut, they haven't got enough staff for the amount of people that they deal with, so that's basically why." [FG14]

"Yeah. I do trust them to deliver services. But on the same token I feel like cost cutting measures, and saving a dollar, sometimes results in poor service delivery." [FG23]

While some of participants were concerned with the attitude of frontline staff which reduced their levels of trust, others acknowledged the work that such staff were doing given the parameters they have to work under and were more positive in their trust ratings:

"Attitude, I want them to change their attitude because when I walk in the office or call them, they think I owe them something. I want them to think that they owe me something. I pay their wages. It's all been phrased, going around, stereo typical but it has become true, I mean, I pay your wages, you do the service for me." [FG2]

"Regardless of what the government view over here of the government today, I do believe regardless of who they are they'll try and do the right thing by you. They're held in by the rules that are set on them. Yeah, within reason they do try, most of them do – because they're like you and me, they try to go and do their job as well as they possibly can, but they've got people further up the tree that don't want them to go and do it." [FG27]

Some participants took this acknowledgement of the efforts of frontline delivery staff further, and identified that the problem with low quality service delivery lays with the managers and the Ministers:

"… it's not the individual people that work the phones that are the issue, it's probably more the management and the bureaucrats that set the rules as to what they can and cannot do. So my seven out of 10 is based on that if you looked at all the staff in the Public Service, I think that just about all of them are good but maybe you've got the few powerful bosses that kind of make it hard for everybody else. So the minus three from 10 is management and Ministers." [FG14]

"They're doing as much as what they can with what they are given [the resources]. It's the ones higher up who makes it harder for them. They try and bend over backwards for you but then they can only go so far." [FG14]

"I think for me it is we need to have trust in the policy and the providers above the coalface because once those rules are written, it doesn't matter how well it happens down further, already the discrimination or the unfair nature of it is already written. So once that policy and the providers get put in place, there's not much anyone else can do underneath." [FG25]

A small number of participants outlined poor service culture experiences which had significant impact on their families (see Box 7). Much of this was due to a lack of empathy expressed by service delivery staff with comments such as "Well, she's in hospital. She doesn't need it anyway." [FG20] following requests for support.

Box 7. Insensitive service delivery experience

Yep. I haven't had too much to do with too many of them but my most recent experience is with [Financial Support Service] and my dad was diagnosed with terminal cancer at the end of November, and he went from working on the Friday to being told he had cancer on the Wednesday and being given a maximum of four months to live the day after. So he went from being employed to going to apply for a pension for him and I have never had to jump through so many hoops and you're right, I don't think there are too many people that – and I guess it would be a horrible place to work, based on same of the people you deal with, but it took eight weeks for my dad to get a pension. My dad was dead 13 weeks after he was diagnosed. So they were just giving us more and more excuses, and you had to do this, and had to do this, and in the end I said, "Are you actually waiting for him to die before you process this application, because that's the impression I'm getting?" and yeah, it was. Within 24 hours I had his pension. But I've got Mum, who was dealing with the shock of it all, so I'm trying to act on their behalf. Then it was, "No, we can't give you any information. We need your dad's signature." My dad went from being working to within 10 days he could barely sign his name, and it was, "Right, okay, I'll get his signature," and it's back and forth, and in the end I said, "Enough. Get me somebody who can answer the questions and tell me what the issue is," because you'd speak to one person who'd say, "Yep, you've got everything you need." The next day you'd go – two days later you'd follow up saying, "Well, what's happening?" and, "Oh, no, we require additional documents." "Well, why wasn't I told that to start with?" It was just robotic, it was horrendous. The worst experience. In the end I said, "Do not contact my mum. Deal with me only because you're creating even more stress than the issues." It was horrible. Absolutely horrific.

[The impact on my family] was horrific. I was trying to protect Mum and Dad in the end but it was doing my head in, just the stress of it all, and you shouldn't have to say, "Are you waiting for him to die so you that you can just terminate the application?" I said that and she said, "Oh, it doesn't matter though because if he's entitled to the pension it'll be backdated to when you lodged the application." So that's the type of mentality that you deal with, and that's only [Financial Support Service]. Look, don't get me wrong, we eventually got one lady who just went above and beyond everything but everyone else, and we went through about nine, was just-----

They wouldn't talk to me on the phone because Dad was unable to give me consent, so I had to take him into [Financial Support Service] one day. He was barely able to walk and so I took him to the front counter and I said, "This is my dad. Can you identify him?" "Yeah, yeah. It's fine." "I'll be back in 15 minutes. I'm going to take him home now," and I came back then and dealt with it but I had to physically take him in. It was just – it was a horrendous experience.

He was in hospice before he passed and I was getting phone calls to verify his condition. Like, seriously? It was a horrible experience. [FG20]

4.4 HOW TRUST AFFECTS UPTAKE OF AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICES

KEY FINDINGS:

1. **A range of factors influence uptake.** Some are based on prior experience (demand-side drivers), others relate to supply-side drivers:

   - Poor communication – A lack of awareness of available services was the most cited reason for lack of service uptake. Other communication issues included poor information provision on websites (jargon, poor navigation) and insufficient advice from service providers about additional services available.

   - Complexity of service delivery – Complexity of service delivery was both a significant barrier to trust and constraint on service uptake. Simplification of application and compliance requirements are essential for improved uptake of available services**.**

   - Access constraints inhibited uptake, including access to internet, transport, quality of shopfront experiences, literacy and language and time constraints

   - Improved resourcing and service culture is essential for uptake – Service delivery delays, perceived poor treatment from frontline staff inhibited service uptake**.**

2. **Quality advocacy increases uptake.** Service complexity, coupled with the push for online service delivery, inhibits many vulnerable people from being able to access services. Advocacy from family, friends, NGOs or service providers helps to navigate service delivery processes in a respectful manner.

3. **Poor uptake may have significant implications for individual and family wellbeing.** The impact of not using services can be significant for individuals and their families due to their pressing need for financial, health, employment or other services.

4. **Locational effects crystallise around the nature of the local economy (e.g. seasonal economy) and the size of the informal "cash" economy.**

A number of factors which affected citizens uptake of available services were identified (see Table 4), with few substantial differences across the communities except for two concerns[7], cost and relevance of policies and programs for community needs which was identified by a small number of communities, particularly highly marginalised communities (eg. low SEIFA).

One participant identified that the cost of services (e.g. medial services, allied health etc) was prohibitive for them, despite the need, due to the need to prioritise basic living costs. Although other participants also noted that the cost of compliance with service requirements resulted in them excluding themselves from the service, despite the financial ramifications:

> *"Well just because it's through the government doesn't necessarily mean that it's not going to cost you anything to access that service. And for many given reasons, sometimes you just can't afford to pay that cost to be able to access that service so you've got more important*

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[7] Another concern raised which differed across communities was access to health services, especially specialist services. However this is a State government issue and hence is not discussed in this report.

things that need to be paid for like electricity bill or the food, rather than getting the help that you need, you need to pay for them way more." [FG34]

"That was when they cut the payments off because I was in [regional town two hours away] and wanted me to come back. … So I was getting paid, I was doing three days' work at the time, so I was getting about $450, and I was still paying my house off in town plus paying a house up there, so I just chose to go through struggle street rather than have to fuel the car up, miss a day's [work], because I didn't have the money to get back from there." [FG6]

Another participant noted not only the cost of access services, but also the capacity of the services to actually make a difference for their lives:

"Make the services a little bit more serviceable. I mean, they're just – they're there, but man, you've got to take out a bank loan to get there or – it's just – everything is just half-hearted, backhanded. I don't think there's anything genuine about much they offer really." [FG9]

These differences are not minor and can inhibit citizens access to services and with that further embed disadvantage. While many government services are free to citizens (within eligibility parameters), it is not only the cost of the service that needs to be considered, but also the cost of accessing that service which can be substantial in regional areas due to the longer distances between service delivery offices – petrol, public transport, time and hence opportunity costs.

AWARENESS

A lack of awareness of available services was raised by the majority of participants as reducing uptake of available services, with one participant describing services as an enigma machine, that it is "*really cryptic to understand what the services are, where you can obtain them from and what you actually get out of it*" [FG29]. This difficulty in accessing information is felt widely, with one participant claiming this lack of clarity is a deliberate management decision:

"I have been told there's a policy that they actually are told not to tell you what you're entitled to. You have to find out what you're entitled to. They're not allowed to actually tell you." [FG30]

Others identified the need to know the right people who are aware of available services:

"A lot of the stuff, as I said, I wasn't even aware of until I actually needed it. In that regard, as I said, very naïve in regards to what's actually out there and what's available until you actually need it. And then, if you don't go to the right people, they don't give you access to the right stuff." [FG10]

"You do need a few dole bludgers in your life so you can find out all this information. That's where I get it all from, it's like people I know. It's like oh, that exists, oh, interesting." [FG10]

One participant with service delivery experience talked of the substantial impact of uncertainty around service delivery due to poor information provision and extenuating circumstances of some service users:

"So in my role as a [service provider] and also as a youth worker, I would have to sometimes physically take the person or client to the service and engage in the service with them

because they were too anxious, nervous, to do it on their own, the fear of the unknown, depression is huge.” [FG29]

EXPERIENCE

As described previously, poor previous service experience can reduce trust, with citizens hesitant to use services following a bad experience, although this can be mitigated by recent positive experiences across their social network:

> *“There’s a lot of water under the bridge that everyone’s had experience with, it’s not left a willingness to continue doing that. How do you trust the things that have been changed for the better until you start to hear better stories. So once you talk amongst your - and hear other people saying, oh no, “it wasn’t that bad this time. They’ve done this, they’ve done that”, then you might be more inclined. But I think at the moment, most people are saying “No way, I’m just not going to be bothered” and it gets put off.”* [FG30]

> *“Sometimes people have been failed so many times by other services that they’re scared to use another one. … And they’re conditioned to have an anxious response because they think it’s just so negative.”* [FG29]

Table 4. Factors influencing the uptake of available services

Factors influencing uptake	Example(s)
Awareness	*"And as I said, they make it very damn hard to access stuff. And a lot of the stuff, I didn't even know was out there until we were about to go bum up." [FG10]*
Distrust of the government	*"Just like, if you don't trust your government, I don't know, you know people who are like, "Oh, I don't trust the government, you don't know what they're up to", why would you use a service that they're providing if you don't trust them in the first place?" [FG34]*
Complexity of accessing services	*"You just end up trying to do without or not avail yourself of the – not inflict on yourself the need to deal with them, and so you're doing it without the service that they provide if they feel like it. … It could be information, it could be money or it could be support, just because at my age I'm getting – I haven't got the energy to jump through the hoops as well as everything else I have to do. And I think I'm doing marvellously well." [FG8]*
Cost of accessing or complying with services (time and money costs)	*"And it's the same when you deal with someone on the phone. The go, "Just pop down to your local [Financial Support Service]." And you go, oh okay, I haven't got money for petrol or I haven't got a car. … That's only a three-hour drive there and three hours back. … Or I have five children and a full-time job and how am I going to get up there?" [FG6]*
Ease of access	*"In cities, if you have to see a person, if you have to go to an office, it's much easier to get to it. Out here, if you can't drive, tough. You've got to find somebody who will drive you to [regional town] or wherever you've got to go. Whereas in the major cities, well, you've got – not saying it's the best transport system in the world, but it gets you around. You don't have to drive. So it's more easy to access shopfront services, if you like, for want of a better word. Whereas out here, if your internet's down, you're buggered." [FG6]* *"Just call them when you've got four hours to sit there and do nothing." [FG8]*
Influence of politicians - instability	*"I avoid it because there's just too much drama. So I don't really use many government services apart from the ATO or Medicare, and that's, as everyone said, you can deal with it yourself." [FG6]*

Factors influencing uptake	Example(s)
Influence of politicians - Changes in service availability	*"It's all out for their own agenda, so usually if there's something, say a good policy or something in place, or these people might need something for their policies, so then you've got to take it from somewhere. It's like that sort of scale. So a lot of the times we'll see good services that may be available and then the next bunch jump in and cut that and cut that, but they do this and do that."* [FG6]
Changes in rules	*"Because the rules change, you maybe qualify at one time, and then they change the rules so you don't, and vice versa, and so, and then it's too late to do anything."* FG7 *"I was on the disability pension until the government thought it was a great idea to make me not disabled anymore."* [FG12]
Information of service available to individuals	*"I find that you just don't know what you're eligible for. I've sat in many offices, I've done all the online tests and still don't understand what I'm eligible for or what makes sense and I still don't fully understand."* [FG16]
Service availability in local community (wait lists)	*"Yeah. It's way too late. You know, lots of those people, unfortunately, you'd be visiting their graves. It's too late."* [FG11]
Poor information	*"I just think that a lot of people don't know what is available. It's not out there enough about benefits and things that people can obtain easily enough. It's all hidden information, and it's up to the person to try and dig in and find out what is available for them, and I don't think they should, I think they should be telling everyone what is available."* [FG19]
Prior experience	*"No, I don't. I've never used it since. I'll be on the bones of my backside before I go back there. I just won't. I refuse. I'll go and get five casual jobs before I use it."* [FG16]
Effective Advocacy	*"[Services are] too difficult for them to access, like they have to fill in forms that are too complicated or for some I guess ... some people don't have the skills to, like again with the aged care, a lot of older people just simply aren't able to navigate that process. And don't have someone to support them to do it."* [FG35]
Poor service culture	*"It's not personal. You are literally a number. There is nothing – people don't know – you're an object."* [FG20]

Factors influencing uptake	Example(s)
Pride/Stigma, or shame of needing service	"Yes. I know lots of people in this town, I've been here a lot of years, a lot of children, and I know just about everyone that works in that [Financial Support Service] office in town. I don't want them to know my business. I feel ashamed that I have to go in there and stand in a queue and I'm sure from myself, I'm not the only that feels that way." [FG21]
Poor eligibility criteria	"The [criteria] are prohibitive to actually giving the money away to people who need it ..." [FG25]
Relevance to needs	"Because it is too difficult. They don't meet my needs. We have needs as a family and what is offered in [community] does not meet these." [FG27]

"Make the services a little bit more serviceable. I mean, they're just – they're there, but man, you've got to take out a bank loan to get there or – it's just – everything is just half-hearted, backhanded. I don't think there's anything genuine about much they offer really." [FG9] |

COMPLEXITY

The complexity of accessing services was a common complaint amongst study participants, raised in all of the focus groups about a range of services. The complexity of services often resulted in participants avoiding accessing services despite their need or eligibility, which affected their quality of living (see also Box 8):

"I've avoided applying for the carer's allowance for my daughter, because the paperwork is so long and the wait time to have it approved or unapproved is so long. And so, I've put it off and put it off and put it off. And it's got to a point now where we absolutely need the money so I'm going through that process and it's not easy." [FG8]

"I haven't even bothered because there's just too many horror stories and like I said, I just can't be - it was hard enough to go through the rigmarole of the disability pension. And then to be told that everything that's been used to get that will now not be used for the new claim. Like it's just a massive headache. And people just in the end, just give up and that's what I've done. …. [It's] majorly stressful." [FG12]

"Based on my past experiences with [Financial Support Service], I'm not even looking into it. We'll try and make it work on one income and just hope for the best. Because I'm like the hoops that I know that I'm going to have to jump through. … I'm just nup. I'm not even going to do it. We'll just eat noodles and hope for the best." [FG1]

For one participant, the complexity of accessing a service detracted them from using the service, instead they used that time to find employment:

"Yeah. I just got a job. It was a lot easier to just get a job. And I wasn't trying not to get a job. I was just at a time where I lost my job suddenly and thought okay I guess I'll go and sign up for this while I'm looking for work, even went to the group thing, I can't remember what I was doing there, and then it was just such a process and I thought how about I actually just invest this time in going and getting a job and I did." [FG12]

ACCESS

The push from the government for online service delivery and information provision was identified as being problematic, with a perception that many potential service users do not have adequate access to the technology or the internet due to both the cost and rural internet access:

"A lot of it goes online, but the people that are in the lower economic group that it's sort of designed for – a lot of these things - they've got no access to the internet." [FG17]

"For important things it's really hard to trust technology because it crashes. And where I'm out on a farm, like we have blackouts and stuff and you just never know. And I don't have a top notch computer. I've got a decent phone, it's not top notch either. It's expensive. It's expensive to get that stuff. [FG10]

This lack of accessibility is further exacerbated for those who also find it difficult to seek further support at a shopfront due to poor transport availability (noting the lack of public transport options in regional areas):

"…if you're in a low income bracket or you need to get a lot of these different services, you possibly haven't got internet anyway, so you've got to go into [Financial Support Service], you've got to find a way of getting to [Financial Support Service] … But there's a lot of people that can't get there to be able to use that, and they haven't got the money to be able to have the internet. … we have people who cannot get in to do their things because they don't have a car, because they can't afford a car." [FG28]

Box 8. Implications of complexity of service access on disadvantaged single mother

Q. To what extent is the level to which you trust government services impacting on the decisions you make in your life?

"[It has] definitely changed my decisions a lot. I struggle with paperwork and stuff and I do need a lot of help now and again depending on what paperwork it is and I've seeked help and they've just told me you need to do it on a computer. So you go to this address and do it on the computer. I go into [Financial Support Service] if I need help with [Financial Support Service] or I go into …

Q. so what happens when they tell you that? What are the consequences of that?

"It means I just don't do it because sometimes I do want to go but I get so frustrated that I just give up. [The consequences of this] for me and my family, if I didn't go and fix what paperwork I've had to do up, my kids wouldn't get fed, my electricity bill, I've needed help with that so I've gone to [Financial Support Service] for that energy rebate thing.

Q. so when you have to go through this process as a consequence of that flow on of events, how does that make you feel?

"[It] makes me frustrated, very frustrated because my kids need food, need electricity like I've gone 3 days without electricity because of it, [I] very emotional, I feel like I'm failing as a mum" [FG4]

In remote communities, the reliance on online service delivery further inhibit service access due to inhibiting factors such as illiteracy and poor technical skills:

"I just wanted to make a point about you asked how we feel accessing these things, I think here we have to be very good at using online information and be very good at reading a lot of the websites and sending things away, and applying and doing a lot of that yourself because it is there, but there is no-one to help you. … If you've got a high level of literacy, both with reading, writing and also computer literacy – in other words, understanding how to use websites and how to submit things, upload documents – I think if you're good and have that good skillset, it can be quite easy accessing these services, but for people who may not have that comfortable ability to go online and read lots and lots of pages of text and then follow intricate computer directions, it can be very challenging for those people within our community." [FG25]

Accessing online services is even harder in remote communities who rely on community based resources for access, although it was perceived that for Indigenous citizens, phone services were also problematic which further affects uptake:

"At the end of the day, not many of them would have even a computer at home, so they've then got to rely on the people from the health clinic for what services they can access." [FG17]

For some citizens, poor accessibility to government services promotes alternative income generation, including seeking employment, or using the black, cash-in-hand, economy. This was identified as being particularly pertinent for citizens with lower levels of literacy:

The issue is that if it's such a [fight] to actually access some of these sorts of services and if you're making enough money to keep the family fed, et cetera, there's a lot of people just not engaging. They're choosing not to engage. … It's not that people don't want to engage, it's just that it's complicated. The government makes simple things complicated." [FG17]

"Maybe I'd say sometimes, but that could be part of the – they're unable to go in there and – like you were saying, they can go out and go there and write their name, but they can't read and write all the rest of it. … Yeah, the shame effect." [FG17]

In some communities, the co-location of services was perceived to be detrimental to service access, with negative associations in using the shopfront and concerns associated with anti-social behaviour. While online is an alternative delivery approach for some, this is not an option for some Australians and does inhibit people from using available services (ie. Medicare):

"Honestly, it feels degrading. … As you go in now, there's security guards. There's people drunk, fighting out the front. You've got to go into a queue and then you will sit with all these drunken people screaming and shouting, security guards turfing people out..." [FG20]

"My 77 year old mum, when this all started when she first went to [Health service], which is in [Financial support service] … The day she walked in there was a couple who were fighting out the front. She was covered in blood, he was covered in blood. He was defecating on the footpath at the door. He'd been kicked out. She walked in and had to sit there for 45 minutes before she was seen. In that time, same thing, there was fights in there. My mum was horrified. … I don't think my mum would set foot in there again now." [FG20]

"People that want to access a Medicare service they're not going to be very game to enter our [Financial Support Service] to do so, to be very honest with you. … Because the demographics of this area do not make for some very lovely interactions, there's some very colourful people inside that building." [FG9]

A significant barrier to the uptake of services, was the lack of available services within the local community. This was identified primarily around health services including NDIS support services and mental health services with patients often not prioritised, despite their urgent needs (see also Box 9):

> "My partner tried to utilise drug and alcohol services, saying I have a problem and he didn't have enough of a problem to help. And I think that's the problem that you've got people on the edge going help me, but oh you're not fucked up enough so we can't help you, wait until you're absolutely fucked and then come and see us and it will be too late." [FG12]

Box 9. Poor access to associated services in regional Australia

My [relative] has been diagnosed with autism so, for him, it took them five months and his mother constantly ringing to find out when they were going to get anything through, whether he was going to get any funding, what funding and accessibility he was allowed to have or where they were going to be able to go for services or whatever. There are no services here in town so she has to go [regional centre] two hours away. If she doesn't go to [regional centre two hours away], she goes to [regional centre three hours away]. That's been knocked on the head now because it's just too far and when you've got to get a little one up who's just turned – he's six, we're on the road at 7.30 in the morning to get him up to [regional centre three hours away] by 11 o'clock. And then you've got the paediatrician saying to us, "Well, why are you here? Why aren't you in [regional community]?" There are no services here in [regional community], in the rural towns, because they don't have them."

This issue of access to services can be compounded in remoter regional communities where the distribution of services is limited and who often have long wait lists for local services due to insufficient planning of resources for communities who service a large regional area:

> "I would say from travelling personally and for work throughout the [State], services probably aren't broadly enough distributed through regional areas, or for people to access them. So we've spoken about the difficulties in using online platforms. The added layers of internet not working in remote locations ... And potentially your culture means that you don't have a fixed address, which means that you won't receive your mail, or mail services to that area are restrictive. In terms of getting the message from Australian government services to those locations and being able to access those services, very difficult." [FG19]

> "I've been on a wait list for two years to see somebody [locally] and I can't - the closest person I'd have to go to is [capital city 4 hour drive] … And I just feel like when you need the help you don't get it. … It's just - in the country we don't get afforded the same opportunities as we do in the city. There's only a few good psychologists, social workers and all that that are having to burden a whole town, and not only that, we are the gateway to the [Region]. So people come to [regional community] for essential services and are putting even more of a strain on them." [FG12]

A number of participants identified time as a constraint to utilising services, including the time it takes to engage with service providers and the opening hours which are not conducive to working Australians:

"Probably time restraints, your ability to actually engage. Like, for a phone call you've got to have somebody in the office to be able to pick that phone call up and if a phone call takes an hour, potentially, and you're supposed to be at work from 8 till 5 o'clock, their office hours might only be that." [FG20]

"Monday to Friday [services are] open, and you don't have a time to go there. So you have to go on sick leave, or annual leave, and then go there. And stand there for two, three hours." [FG23]

"But even with [Financial Support Service] they most likely just refer you to the online callers where you've got to sit on hold for three hours and you can't take a day off to sit on hold all day. … Yeah, well that's the point, we all work and their office hours are our work hours." [FG26]

Participants also talked about the need for extended office and telephone hours to enable better engagement from working citizens, including the potential for a call-back service that provides an estimated time of the call-back so as people can plan their day (following services offered in the private sector).

One participant expressed concern at the overall accessibility of government services, including information, service automation and inflexible service 'boxes' which don't account for all citizens circumstances:

"With increase in population, public demand, public services have grown away with a lot of businesses we are very hard to contact, very hard to get information, it's hard to find, and sometimes the variety of the information is confusing. We get presented with automated services when we get called which can be extremely frustrating, especially someone with a disability to go through that constantly for a variety of different services, can be really tricky and there is no other way around that. And individuals are very much expected to fit into boxes, and services sometimes aren't flexible enough to adequately deal with the shades of grey." [FG32]

For some participants, access to services is not about technical or logistical concerns but eligibility, with eligibility criteria limiting the services they are able to use:

"Sometimes there's no choice. At the moment I'm going through a few health issues and was told yesterday by a fairly high up institution in the public health system that, "We can't help you anymore, you've got to go elsewhere because your treatment categorisation doesn't meet our service policies so we've got to hand you on pretty much." So yes, there is no choice and I've got to go elsewhere to try and get help." [FG34]

INFORMATION PROVISION

The poor quality of information provision was often raised as a barrier to trust and uptake. The complexity of information, the jargon language, and poor presentation were all raised as barriers:

"… I will sit there and read everything digital and kind of go, "Really?" Because a lot of what's there is not relevant, it's not presented very well … not everyone's going to sit in

front of digital media to work out what their rights and entitlements are and all the rest of that, so it becomes really problematic." [FG17]

"I am a fan of online platforms, but I would agree that how the information is portrayed isn't always user friendly. And the information they do share isn't necessarily the information you need, and the explanatory terms of what might be your needs and why you would need this service, it would be displayed in other language – not in other language, in English, but it would be in government terms." [FG19]

One participant highlighted the need for improved information and contextual sensitivity as local conditions affect citizens' capacity to access services:

"… if I wanted to go into [Financial Support Service] and sit down with somebody and say, "Look, we've got a client who's having a bit of a problem with this, what do we give them as advice?", our local [Financial Support Service] Aboriginal staff will be more than helpful considering everything that we need, throw a lot of brochures at us, which is completely useless because the person is illiterate, but educate us to do it. And if I were to do that on the phone; completely different story. I would get some lunatic from Tasmania." [FG17]

For many participants, issues of data privacy were a barrier to uptake. Concerns were not necessarily about poor trust in the government with personal information, but concerns about future governments and potential changes and the selling of data:

"When it comes to giving things like my rights, and my information to the government, it's not a question of can I trust this government with my information, it's can I trust future governments. … So, would I trust this government? Yeah I probably would. But there's no guarantee that it's going to be the same government in 20 years time. It's future governments I don't trust. And also, systems are not perfect. Things do get hacked." [FG24]

"I am not happy with it at all. So one of you brought up data leakage and how they're collecting all your data, well with that data collection that they've done, it's available to everybody and it can be very easily linked back to you, and they're selling your information as well." [FG26]

ALTERNATIVES TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES

For some citizens, poor accessibility of services encourages citizens to seek alternatives to government services. These alternatives may include other forms of income generation, including seeking employment or using the black, cash-in-hand, economy. The black economy was identified in every community, with communities with seasonal work, low incomes and highly remote[8] using the black economy the most. This was identified as being particularly pertinent for citizens with lower levels of literacy:

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[8] This is not always for income generation, may also be to support friends and other community members and receive a small amount of money as a thank you. In remote communities was often to share resources/skills etc that were difficult to access.

"Maybe I'd say sometimes, but that could be part of the – they're unable to go in there and – like you were saying, they can go out and go there and write their name, but they can't read and write all the rest of it. … Yeah, the shame effect." [FG17]

For some, extra assistance through other forms of income is critical due to the general cost of living:

"It's the only way some people survive. Because if you've got your own house and you're on the dole or something like that, by the time you pay your rent and your electricity, and you see some of these people, they're getting $400 electricity [bills] and they have jack shit on and it's like – how can you afford that? And you've only got a certain amount of time to pay it." [FG14]

Others chose to use the black economy due to the complexity of accessing services:

"The issue is that if it's such a [fight] to actually access some of these sorts of services (112:50) and if you're making enough money to keep the family fed, et cetera, there's a lot of people just not engaging. They're choosing not to engage. … It's not that people don't want to engage, it's just that it's complicated. The government makes simple things complicated." [FG17]

"No, I was earning more doing cash in hand than what I would get from Centrelink. [without] having to sit in line." [FG14]

Other alternatives to public service delivery identified during the focus groups included simply going without, using community sector services (eg. community transport buses to enable people to access health and other government services in regional centres), local community fundraising (see Box 1), and using the support of family, friends and other local networks. The use of private services was not identified by many due to the high costs associated with private services, despite their pressing need (eg. mental health services where local services have high wait times).

The use of alternative service pathways and the potential role for local community members and organisations highlights the need for place-based services that understand the community needs, service gaps and community capacity to fill these gaps. With this understanding, alternative pathways can be promoted, and alternative pathway systems provided with adequate resources that enables them to support citizens effectively. Such alternative pathway systems are typically bespoke to their community, which may be based around a geographic location or based on various cultural or demographic characteristics (eg. Indigenous, women, youth). Given these various communities within any geographic location, it is important to be mindful of what resources are within the broader communities and how they can be shared (where appropriate).

DEMAND FOR SERVICES

Participants did not often identify services that they felt were needed in their community that they could not already access, with most acknowledging that the vast majority of Australia public services were available either within the community, online or over the telephone: "*There shouldn't be in today's society with technology and all we should be able to access everything.*" [FG24]. There may be shortages of service availability delays in delivery of services (e.g. passport) due to their remote location:

"Doctors won't come here. They see us as a backwater and they want to obviously live the life or whatever in a Metropolitan area." [FG14]

"… a lot of it is because people don't want to come here. They're happy in [capital city] or [major regional town]; … and they don't want to come up to [regional town]. [FG35]

Services that were identified as not being provided were typically health related (e.g. access to specialists, mental health service providers and associated services (see Box 8) or related to internet access, with reliable internet difficult in remote Australia.

For others, the small gains from accessing the service were not sufficient to bother navigating the system:

"Yeah, I went in to get a carer's allowance for my daughter, and I had like 70 pages to fill out, so it wasn't enough for me to bother. And I was separated from my husband at the time, and it involved all the assets and everything, so I thought "No"." [FG19]

"Not worth the jumping of hoops for what you are getting." [FG25]

One focus group participant preferred not to access eligible services as they valued their personal freedoms and did not want to be trapped by service obligations:

"A treasure for me is the word "freedom", and I feel every single time I enrol myself in one of those services, I feel almost like I'm trapped, and this may be the wrong word, but as long as I can do what I need to do to live okay within my financial means, I'll do so. I like the freedom that I don't feel obliged or that I maybe not a burden to the government in general. All the other people, because people, some of them desperately need them and some people maybe not but they get them anyway." [FG22]

4.5 HOW CAN THE GOVERNMENT IMPROVE TRUST IN PUBLIC SERVICES IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA?

KEY FINDINGS:

1. **Regional citizens want service delivery that reflected their needs:** 'vanilla' is fine for simple transactional interactions, but 'bespoke' personal contact and understanding (empathy) was needed for more complex cases.
2. **Regional citizens want choice and flexibility** in the way services are delivered (online, telephone, face-to-face) according to their needs.
3. **Regional citizens want transparency on the progress of service delivery:** they do not expect miracles, but regular feedback on the progress of their applications was seen as important to recognise their situation and that the service was actually being delivered.
4. **Regional citizens would like a one-stop-shop**: while they do not differentiate between departments or agencies unless prompted, and would like public service delivery to be a one-stop-shop which provides proactive service delivery options and information based on their eligibility.
5. **Public service users expect staff to be knowledgeable and empathetic**, and would like to see more training on both fronts to improve consistency across interactions.
6. **User-centric service design is critical.** More citizen and frontline staff involvement in policy development was seen to be a way to make services more relevant and recognise local imperatives, and mitigate the 'Canberra bubble'.

Regional citizens provided a number of insights on how service delivery could be improved from their perspective. Their conclusions predominantly centred around the four trust components: integrity, empathy, loyalty, delivery, and were focussed particularly on accessibility through flexible delivery methods, accountability, transparency, and the simplification of service offers.

USER-CENTRIC DESIGN

The expressed demand for personalised services relevant to the individual citizen identified the need for collaborative user-designed services that best suit the citizens to whom the services are being delivered, and which may change from one community to the next.

> "...it's not what the community needs. They deliver a blanket approach that doesn't suit everyone, that doesn't suit communities, the areas that they're delivered in, and there's no room for adjusting." {FG29}

Some participants noted the top-down approach for policy and service delivery and the need for more bottom-up approaches.

> "I don't think that we've been given the opportunity. At the moment they're starting to look at the NGOs to develop programs, but it's still a policy made by government. It's still run by them and you still have to work it their way basically. You can't come and develop your own policies and procedures because you still have to meet your KPIs, and it's all about KPIs and money, and it's not about quality of the job; it's about quantity of people accessing the services and it's crap!" [FG25]

"Realistically, through community consultation reassessing and redefining what communities need, what services need to be delivered and work to that accordingly." [FG29]

"And they're making these programs and policies for that, and that's why I'm saying come, experience it, then have a comment." [FG35]

It was common for participants to be sympathetic towards frontline staff who, they believed, were often doing the best job they could often under trying circumstances.

"I'd say talk to the people in your frontline and take them seriously because I talk to a lot of people who find their jobs frustrating because they know and because they talk to us every day, they know the issues and they get slammed against the wall too because of this, but they don't generally have anywhere to take it. I don't think it goes back up the ranks to understand that something needs to change when it needs to change." [FG30]

"My experience has been quite good, I've found them to be very helpful when I've gone in there. But I notice the staff levels are getting lower and lower all the time, so the wait to get there is longer, but that's okay, I've got the time to do that. But I think the stress factor that they're under, because they are dealing with a lot of people in a delicate situation. And, unfortunately those people can turn on the [Financial Support Service] employee, not realising if they get heated or whatever the case may be. So I can understand they're in a hard situation to start with. I don't think there's, the backup is not there for these people. They're only young, inexperienced people that I've dealt with, they don't know the answer to the questions, so they've got to get on and find out anyway." [FG19]

ACCESSIBILITY

The need for a mix of service delivery mechanisms, rather than focusing too much online, was noted by many, as was the need to take such reforms slowly to enable the users time to adapt:

"I think they need more people on the ground, rather than taking so much of it online. Because as I said once, it's online and it doesn't work. It really doesn't work. And they need more collaboration between departments, as everyone said. And they really need to listen." [FG16]

"I think one of the issues with completely going online, is we have people here who, number one, English is not their first language. And who don't understand the system… They need help…to expect these people to get services online is unthinkable, it would never work. They need people who can go to the community, and who can help them do what they need to do. …" [FG23]

"But you see as more technology comes in it creates issues in other areas so I think it's really a matter of doing it gradually and making sure the customer or consumer is familiar and confident with that product before you move completely to a different platform and there are certain sectors of the community that are never going to want to go online, they are going to want to speak to a person face to face, not even over the phone and that's where I think that's really hard particularly in regional areas, because you don't have that access to a person to speak to and that's what some people still want." [FG32]

Several focus group participants talked about the challenges of accessing some services due to them only being open during business hours, with several suggestions to improve this including initiating a call back service to reduce wait time on the phone, improving communications on the progress of applications (eg an online dashboard) to reduce follow-up phone queries, and simply providing longer hours of services both call centres and shopfronts:

> "I would suggest something like a 24 hour services so there's always a number you could call or there's always a chat room that you can talk to someone at like 11pm instead having to come back on Monday or having to wait over the weekend or having to skip your lunchbreak to have to go to [Financial Support Service] to wait in line because when you finish work, it's after 5pm. Just to provide services that will be available to everyone more often. It would show that they care and have responsibility for you and that would heighten my trust in them – it would like wow –they're doing that for us. They're trying to help us." [FG3]

> "I would like to see more flexible opening hours because even – okay, I work all the daylight hours and sometimes I don't get in until after dark but even if you could just say, for the people who are in regional areas and it takes them a while to get in, just add that travelling and to time it with when all this might be going on, you know? Maybe someone from [regional centre] works in [regional town] and they can get a visit in like that. And possibly, even a touring[mobile service]." [FG8]

When asked to identify what they would change to improve service delivery, many participants wanted simplification, to reduce the bureaucracy and make things easier to deliver the services promised to people:

> "Maybe what we need is like a government Choosy. … So, like you have a one stop shop and they do all the mucking around looking for you and they bring all the information together and say here you go." [FG32]

> "There's too many ands, ifs or buts. Too many rules. They need to narrow everything down. You're either eligible for this or you're not eligible." [FG16]

> "I'd like to see the way they've done the thing with services New South Wales; do that with other branches where you go in and just talk to someone and its sub-branches for all them." [FG8]

This may include, for example, specific counters for low-complexity queries as directed by the shopfront concierge to enable fast service delivery where possible:

> "Well, I only use it once or twice. Like it's very minimal usage. And minimal contact. So, when I just need somebody for one thing, it would be great if I could just go in, say what I've got to say, help fill out the actual form or whatever it is, and then be done with it." [FG28]

> "They've got a counter there. They've got a counter there with people sitting there. You should be able to, like the old way they used to do it, you could go to the counter, say I've got this form I've got to hand in, it's got to be in by a certain – and hand it in. … Now, you take the form in, you've got to go sit over in the corner like an hour or two just to go and hand a form to somebody to say okay, that's all in order and off you go." [FG33]

"I remember back in the olden days we'd walk in and you'd be – able to do it at the desk, simple problem; done. Walk in there now – no matter how simple the problem is, they would send you to sit down. You could sit there half hour, hour before you see somebody about something that's so simple and can be done over the counter. They will send you to sit down for half an hour or an hour. I think that's what they really need to fix up." [FG35]

COMMUNICATION

Citizens believed that better feedback and information delivery was essential to them feeling respected, to empowering them with the right information to solve their issues efficiently, and to their sense that their issue was actually progressing:

"If they're busy, to have the opportunity to leave a message and get called back when they're not busy, instead of just getting hung up on and told to try again." [FG8]

"And transparency and perhaps even on their websites, just making those policy statements just so much more visible. Okay, I want to find out about that and that would go a long way in that if you want to find out whether you are eligible for something and the statement, duty says that we will look after the people who require the service, well there's your line that you can push ahead with it. So just having those statements." [FG12]

Participants wanted to be informed of their service delivery progress and outcomes. They wanted better service delivery communications, including getting responses to enquiries/applications (within set timeframes), and being kept up to date as to where the application is at (whether it be via an online, app, email, text or personal telephone call):

"In a certain timeframe, not 'eventually'. Give a timeframe." [FG28].

"I'd like a service which can help me find the right information something which is complete and I can help myself, get the right answers but be able to speak to a human or something similar like a bot or something if I can't get the right answers. So, I would like to have all the resources there to be able to find out what exactly the department offers but having someone a human there would be great." [FG32]

STAFF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

With respect to the impact of frontline staff (both by telephone and face-to-face) on trust and experience, regional citizens expressed a desire for more staff (to reduce waiting times), more training for staff (both to expand their capability to deal with issues and to deal with them more empathetically):

"I know [Financial Support Service] do provide that service here. Because I've got a friend that's husband [sic] works there, and he's always out bush in communities teaching them, you know, and explaining things to them. But there's not enough staff on the ground." [FG23]

"It gets back down to training, training of staff, but give staff motivation to respect their positions and the people they're dealing with." [FG11]

"I've got a lot to do with [Financial Support Service] face-to-face issues. I think that some of their staff are not trained well enough. Some of them are very, very good and some of them are hopeless and there's a lot in between and I don't know anything about their training and how they do it, but I get the impression that a lot of their staff are not trained." [FG34]

"But I think when it comes to things like the [Financial Support Service] and those sort of intricate dealings and things, and I guess [Financial Support Service] that - I think there has to be a certain level of training and understanding that as a consumer they should know more than us. I think there's an expectation that you actually should know more than what I know on this subject, that's why I'm ringing you." [FG30]

Additionally, there is potential to move away from the traditional staffing models of government services, and work more closely with local communities to empower local community members to provide ongoing support to their community, thus enable bespoke and culturally appropriate service delivery:

"Yeah, pretty much the same, empowering people. Giving them the tools to help themselves. … They don't need to have a [Financial Support Service] agent doing that, there's people that could be working better amongst their own people within the schools or within the community services, should be able to help, because then you've got someone who cares too. Maybe in some communities there's people within those communities that could help deliver and help the people… [FG21]

ADVOCACY

A key observation was the reported extensive use of both formal and informal advocacy to achieve outcomes when dealing with public services.

"I notice with my mum being a pensioner, she can't use a computer that well, I have to go in and bat for her a lot. Like, ring up and rip to get anything done. And I think if someone hasn't got someone that can do that, with all of these departments, then they're in trouble." [FG11]

"So then I'm asking questions along those lines and one of the first things [Health Service Agency] said to me, "Right, you need your mother here, you need your father here, they need to authorise over the phone that you are connected and can go in and have a look at all their data, you can make decisions, you can be the contact person." And if you didn't have a support or an advocate I don't think – there's a lot of elderly people out there that need services, would qualify for services, but are not getting them because there's not somebody there [for them]." [FG15]

"I don't know how many times she walked out of [Financial Support Service], just absolutely bawling her eyes out because they would tell her a different story, and she would have to start back at square one. And it made me angry. And I think they should have a designated person, "Okay, you're applying for the pension. Sit down with me, we'll go through what you want, do you have a computer?". [FG19]

In sum, the lessons we can learn from these citizen insights are:

- Improve the service experience – cut the complexity, reduce the silos, make services easier to access, increase the knowledge of front-line staff;
- Increase the transparency of the service process (e.g. "like the ATO"), including clear lines of accountability between government and citizen;
- Embed a service culture – address issues of poor customer service through reforms that recognise and respect citizens. Improved training and resourcing of front-line staff is essential;
- Deliver for citizens – deliver services that suit citizens not government. Make them accessible by reducing wait times, hold office hours outside normal business hours to improve access, use a variety of delivery platforms that are designed to suit the environmental context ;
- Ensure that the right information is in the right place at the right time. Improve clarity of, and access to, information and thereby increase awareness of services. Use a variety of channels to target a range of audiences.

5.   THE VIEW FROM THE TOP: INSIGHTS FROM APS THOUGHT LEADERS

APS LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES ON THE BARRIERS AND ENABLERS TO PUBLIC SERVICE PRODUCTION

We interviewed a group of prominent APS thought leaders on how the APS could use the public service experience as a space for trust building. Informants were selected on the basis of their portfolio and track record in delivering high quality programs and services to Australian citizens, and engaging in service innovation. Informants were asked to review the key observations emerging from the Citizen Experience Survey and to reflect on the implications of the findings (see Box 10).

Box 10. Key observations from the Citizen Experience Survey

> - Satisfaction (52%) with Australian public services is higher than trust (31%).
> - Trust is significantly lower in regional (27%) in contrast to urban (32%) areas.
> - Personal individual service delivery experiences drive overall trust.
> - Perceptions of transparency affect trust.
> - Service experience during significant life events affect trust in the APS.
> - Citizens and/or residents who were born overseas have high levels of trust.
> - Participants could not establish an independent view of the APS; they just see government.
> - The APS can improve elements of service-delivery to drive higher levels of trust.
> - The evidence points to the need to build collaboration across the APS, enhance service delivery reform, and ultimately, drive tailored responses that reflect the voices of Australians.

"What worries me is we keep on knowing what the problem is, we keep on articulating it and why are we not doing anything about it? That's what worries me. So my question is, have we sufficiently articulated the barriers from a bureaucratic perspective to actually make change? We seem to know what the problems are but we actually don't get out on the ground and try to do real solutions when we need to (KS8)."

APS leaders were not surprised by the results of the Citizen Experience Survey but did identify several mitigating factors that need to be taken into account in any response. First, constitutionally the APS cannot address the problem of declining political trust and by implication the perceived poor performance of politicians; although it evidently impacts on public perceptions of the quality of public service delivery. The focus of the APS effort should therefore be on improving the quality of service delivery; a task within the APS's domain of responsibility. Second, citizens are less likely to trust services that form part of government policies that they disagree with; hence you will never be able to please everybody. Third, Australians have high expectations of service delivery that might be difficult to meet given budgetary constraints. They expect to have the same quality of experience with public and private sector service providers. It is therefore important to establish a public expectation thesis, i.e. given prevailing constraints what could the service provider reasonably be expected to achieve? Fourth, accessing complex services requires significant citizen effort due to legislative requirements, which is likely to lead to diminished trust. And, fifth, many services that Australians receive are in David Thodey's terms "seamless" and "invisible" (e.g. PBS,

Medicare) but, because they do not involve formal evaluation touch-points, go unrecognised by the citizen.[9]

BARRIERS TO THE DELIVERY OF HIGH-QUALITY GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Figure 7 provides an overview of APS leaders' perceptions of the key barriers to the delivery of high-quality government services. These have been organised around cognitive, institutional, and environmental barriers. Cognitive barriers refer to obstacles to the capacity of the APS to understand the service needs of Australians and deliver on the service promise.

> *"To build trust we need to actually engage with people and businesses that consume services from government in the way that they think about services rather the way we're organised in government."* [KS2]
>
> *"At the end of the day, it can't get much worse, it can only get better. And until they put some normal people in that actually know what it's about that I suppose, for argument's sake, a normal person, not one that sits behind a big oak desk and whatever else and has actually had experiences, that have had drought experiences and aged care experiences and [Financial Support Service] experiences, whatever, those people, they are the ones that can actually try and change it for the better because they've actually been there, done that, not sit behind a desk and let some other puppet do all their work for them."* [FG5]

Institutional barriers refer to internal organisational issues which impact on the capacity of public organisations to create and deliver quality public services. The key institutional barriers to delivery identified by APS leaders include: siloed systems that are not conducive to service delivery; complexity in service design and access; difficulty in finding the right information, at the right time, in the right context; reactive service management; poor communication with users about entitlements and obligations; users being required to provide information multiple times; and, the complexity of tools provided by government.

> *"I think without exception the user journey approach is being accepted within agencies. A really strong desire to understand how to do collaborative delivery is also strongly supported. We have a community of practice, we have guilds, we have training and development programs that are proving to be very popular across the APS. I think the thing that is most challenging though, is as we think about user experience it invariably spans agencies, and layers of government."* [KS2]

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[9] Follow-up questions with our APS leaders included: what can the APS/your department do to help address these issues? Are there new capabilities and technologies that could make a difference? Are there other ways that the APS can help bridge the trust divide? And, how will the APS achieve David Thodey's recommendation of "seamless services and local solutions designed and delivered with states, territories and partners"?
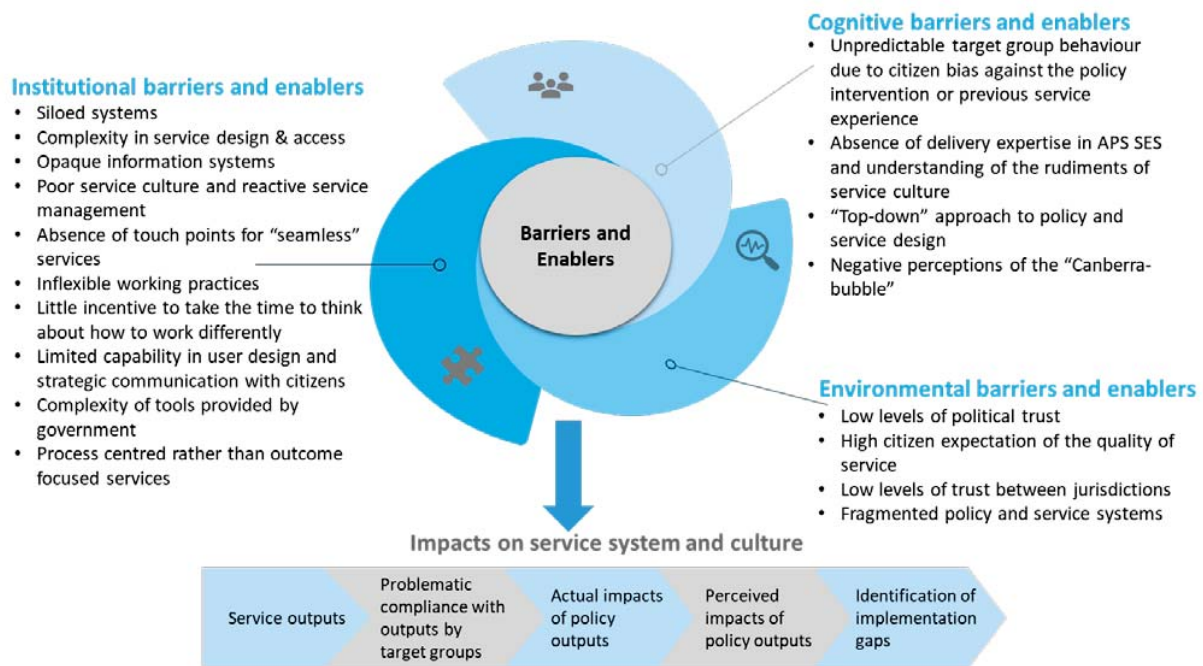
Figure 7. Barriers and enablers to service delivery identified by APS leaders

Environmental barriers refer to exogenous factors which can undermine the capacity of public organisations to create and deliver quality public services. Most environmental factors are beyond the control of public organisations but need to be factored into strategic thinking particularly in areas of risk-management and strategic communication to staff. In this instance they include: 1) low levels of political trust; 2) high citizen expectation of the quality of service; 3) low levels of trust between jurisdictions; and, 4) fragmented policy and service systems.

Most of these barriers can also be identified as conditions for high quality service provision. For example, if we consider the cognitive barriers in Figure 7 these involve:

1) unpredictable target group behaviour due to citizen bias against the policy intervention or frustration with previous service experience;
2) the absence of delivery expertise in APS SES and limited understanding of the imperatives of a service culture;
3) a 'top-down' approach to policy and service design; and,
4) negative perceptions of the "Canberra bubble" (the 'tyranny of distance').

Each of these barriers can be turned into a positive value if a transformational strategy is implemented to reverse prevailing conditions. For example, 1) potentially can be addressed through improvements to the service culture; 2) potentially can be addressed through recruitment of appropriate capability; 3) potentially can be addressed through integrated policy systems and inclusive policy design; and, 4) potentially can be addressed through better strategic communication and authentic community engagement and co-design.

These sets of barriers do not exist in a vacuum but interact with one another in complex and often unexpected ways. They provide a basis for strategic thinking about both the necessary conditions for high quality service provision and effective strategies for achieving them (refer Figure 2).

ENABLERS TO THE DELIVERY OF HIGH-QUALITY GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Most informants argued that a culture shift was required in the way Commonwealth departments and agencies manage and deliver public services to meet the Thodey aspiration of "seamless services and local solutions designed and delivered with states, territories and partners". Although many noted that a change process was underway in most agencies, four specific reform themes loomed large in discussion.

First, most of these APS leaders recognised the need for a whole of government approach to combat declining trust in regional and remote communities:

> *"The APS footprint can be used to facilitate whole of APS collaboration in community engagement (KS4)."*

> *"The APS should be able to collaborate whole of government in policy design and delivery through shared accountability mechanisms and budgetary incentives (KS1)."*

Three service delivery principles were emphasised by most informants: regional decentralisation; user-first design; and, personalisation supported by a strong service culture.

> *"Practice co-(user) design by default and use behavioural insights to improve our understanding of the needs and aspirations of target groups and develop personalised service offerings (KS6)."*

> *"Develop opportunities for dynamic engagement with users through inclusive service design and strategic communication (KS5)."*

For example, it was argued strongly that departments should see user feedback as an opportunity for progress; i.e. a problem-seeking culture should be fostered. All complaints should be taken seriously and considered at executive board level. Simulators should then be used to make progress (e.g. ATO simulation lab, DTA's co-lab).

> *"Each and every SES officer needs to do service delivery, so they understand that their role in life is to service the citizens of Australia through the elected government of the time. So that's what we're here for, we should never lose sight, every single day we should never lose sight that were actually doing this for the greater good (KS6)."*

Most significantly, it was observed by several respondents that digital should not be viewed as the cure-all for regional service delivery problems nor should we assume that citizens believe this to be the case either:

> *"I think that the opportunities for regional areas are exactly the same as anywhere else because the key thing is that digital is not the answer to everything, we always view it as part of a mix of different solutions which may be backend, it could be front-end service delivery – you know, that direct relationship or the interaction and transaction occurring between the customer service officer and the individual. The solutions may range so digital is always a part of, as opposed to the end in itself; and so therefore there will be particular context or situations where digital could be made use of in order to reach greater numbers of people in regional areas. But only when we deem it to be a useful part of the solution (KS9).*

PUBLIC SERVICES AS A SPACE FOR TRUST BUILDING

The evidence from our interviews with APS leaders points to the need to build collaboration across the APS, enhance service-delivery reform, and ultimately, drive tailored responses that reflect the plurality of individual and community identities in Australia. The degree of common ground between citizens and APS leaders on both the barriers and enablers to a higher quality service experience is remarkable and helps us to clarify six pathways to reform (see Table 5).).

1. **Achieve 'line of sight'** between policy, programmes and services around the first principle of integrating program management and delivery functions through regional service centres.
2. **Citizen-centred service culture** – introduce a 'user-first', 'co-design' approach for all services and a personalisation approach with strong advocacy capability for citizens experiencing complex problems. Citizens stress the need for greater client care and support.
3. **Capacity, communication and capability** –enhance service culture capability, greater advocacy support for the vulnerable and intelligent marketing and communication of government services through targeted channels (strategic communication and engagement).
4. **Service quality** – establish a single source of truth across government information and reduce the complexity of the service offer.
5. **Service experience** – introduce a 'tell us once' integrated service system which values the time of the citizen and understands and empathises with their service journeys.
6. **Citizen-centred service innovation** – an opportunity for innovation lies in digital access and support; the creation of integrated regional service hubs; the recruitment of "trusted" and "local" community service coordinators; and viewing complaints as learning opportunities

Table 5. Barriers and enablers to quality service provision

Delivery barriers	Service reform
Lack of proactive engagement from government with users	Personalisation of public services e.g. identification and 'push out' of relevant user services
Users experience difficulty finding the right information, at the right time, in the right context	Establish a 'single source of truth' across government information
Access to services is hindered by the complexity of government structures	Join-up, simplify and ensure 'line of sight'; collaborations across agencies to enable holistic delivery/programs; more emphasis on partnerships with other levels of govt (or service providers) to leverage resources and enable improved outcomes
Users are uncertain about government entitlements and obligations	Proactive engagement from government through strategic communication
Public services are not meeting user service delivery expectations	Strengthen service charters and incentivise performance to improve delivery outcomes
Users are being required to provide information multiple times	Establish 'tell us once' – integrated service systems; digital advances, one-stop-shop, data matching opportunities to produce seamless services based on known data
Inconsistent and inaccessible content	Adopt user-first design principles
Complexity of tools provided by government	Simplify around user needs

6. RECOMMENDATIONS: "CITIZENS NOT CUSTOMERS – KEEP IT SIMPLE, SAY WHAT YOU DO AND DO WHAT YOU SAY"

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Achieve 'line of sight'** between policy, programmes and services around the first principle of integrating program management and delivery functions through regional service centres.
2. **Citizen-centred service culture** – introduce a 'user-first', 'co-design' approach for all services and a personalisation approach with strong advocacy capability for citizens experiencing complex problems. Citizens stress the need for greater client care and support.
3. **Capacity, communication and capability** – enhance service culture capability, greater advocacy support for the vulnerable and intelligent marketing and communication of government services through targeted channels (strategic communication and engagement).
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5. **Service experience** – introduce a 'tell us once' integrated service system which values the time of the citizen and understands and empathises with their service journeys.
6. **Citizen-centred service innovation** – an opportunity for innovation lies in digital access and support; the creation of integrated regional service hubs; the recruitment of "trusted" and "local" community service coordinators; and viewing complaints as learning opportunities.

The following recommendations do not represent a commitment by PM&C or the Australian Government to change but have been distilled by the research team for further exploration by the APS. The recommendations have emerged from three sources: interviews with APS leaders, focus groups with Australian citizens and a co-design workshop convened with core stakeholders to translate the research findings in a meaningful way for practice. The recommendations correspond with the key findings that emerge from this research as reflected in the subtitle of our report – "Citizens not customers, keep it simple, say what you do and do what you say".

We argue, in concluding this report, that public services can be a critical space for trust-building between government and citizen but this requires development of citizen-centric service models that place the language of the citizen at the centre of service culture, design and delivery and embrace the mantra – "Citizens not customers – keep it simple, do what you say and say what you do". "Citizens and not customers" because the notion of citizenship builds trust. It helps establish a trust system between government and citizen that is based on parity of esteem and creates common ground for transactions to take place. In contrast, given imperfect access to resources, customers are inherently unequal and potentially a force for distrust.

There are at least two other differences in the use of the concept of the citizen and the customer that are germane to our discussion. First, the customer is self-regarding –he/she largely choose what is best for themselves in the marketplace. In contrast, citizens regard others and particularly the needs of society – they choose what is best for society. Or at least they choose their perception of what is best for society. Citizens possess individual rights but recognize their obligations to the community. Second, citizens have

broad ownership of the problems of society and have a common responsibility for fixing those problems. Customers expect those problems to be fixed for them. Hence, citizenship is potentially an empowering force and the customer a disempowering one.

A common argument against using the concept of citizen is the claim that many of the people the APS provides services for aren't Australian citizens. This argument is problematic both from an international legal perspective and because of the issues outlined above with the alternatives. All visitors and residents (temporary or permanent) in Australia enjoy different rights and gradations of citizenship even if they are not full citizens because Australia is a signatory to a range of international laws that ensure equal treatment (including for children under the UN Charter) and has a number of bi-lateral agreements with individual countries that extend certain rights. For example, British tourists have certain healthcare service and working visa entitlements that are reciprocated for Australian citizens in the United Kingdom. In short, the APS serves different types of citizen.

Meeting citizen expectations inevitably requires both a better understanding of the service needs and aspirations of an increasingly segmented citizenry and a service culture that see's like a citizen and not a customer.

As noted in Section Five, the degree of common ground between citizens and APS leaders on the enablers to a higher quality service experience is remarkable and this has also proven the case with our workshop participants. This has helped us to clarify six iterative and potential pathways to reform for further exploration. These largely align with the constituent elements of the best practice service delivery framework presented in Section Two and Appendix 1.

1. ACHIEVE 'LINE OF SIGHT' BETWEEN POLICY, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AROUND THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRATING PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY FUNCTIONS THROUGH REGIONAL SERVICE CENTRES

'Line of sight' is achieved when there is a clear accountability route between delivery in the community (outcomes) and the high-level goals the agency has set itself (see Figure 8).[10] The evidence here clearly demonstrates that public services are a creative space for building trust with the citizen but there appear to be systemic barriers to the achievement of 'line of sight' in practice. Two key strategic questions come to the fore. What can an agency do to achieve 'line of sight', lift performance and link Canberra better to the front-line and the front-line better to Canberra? And, what can the entire APS do (more generally whole-of-government) to achieve line of sight, lift performance and link Canberra better to the frontline and the frontline better to Canberra?[11]

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[10] See: Evans, M. and McGregor, C. (2018), *Mandate for change: Towards an integrated service delivery model*, Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, for an attempt to achieve this approach in the APS.

[11] See: Productivity Commission New Zealand (2017), *Measuring and Improving State Sector Productivity*, Issues Paper, July 2017; PwC (2013), *Improving public sector productivity through prioritisation, measurement and alignment*, December.
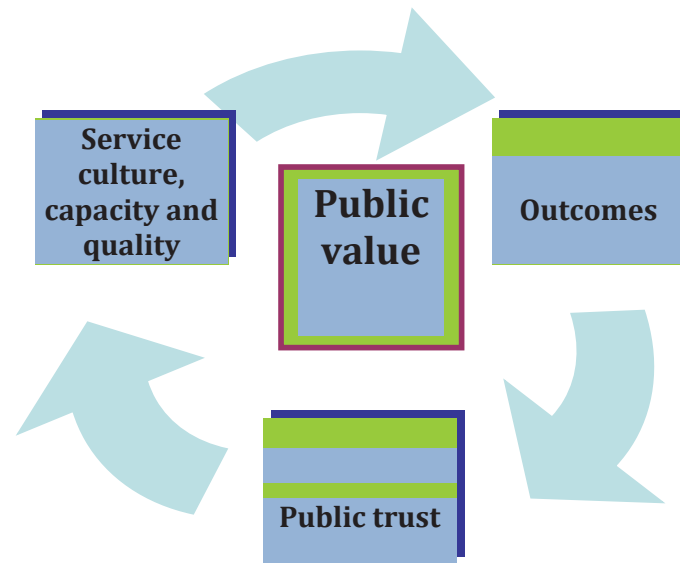
Figure 8. The 'public service value cycle'

The development and implementation of a common service delivery framework for APS agencies with service delivery functions such as this one would be a useful starting point. This would also require an outcomes-based approach which is generally considered more likely to motivate those who will achieve the results sought: frontline workers and citizens themselves. This is the key to lifting service performance.

One of the difficulties with performance targets is that if they are not linked explicitly to outcomes through line of sight they can create a culture that works exclusively to meet targets without regard for the broader goals and the system in which government operates, resulting in the phenomenon of hard working organisations which achieve targets in the short term but which achieve less and less over the long term. By re-focusing on a small number of measurable and verifiable outcomes in different areas of policy endeavour, agencies can stay motivated on making progress.[12]

Then there is the question of how APS delivery agencies can achieve the degree of service integration that citizens would like to experience. The APS's significant regional footprint provides rich opportunities in this regard (see Figure 6.2). This could include the development of a regional institution aimed at: 1) enhancing community engagement and inclusion; 2) improving service culture; and 3) achieving service integration (e.g. Services Australia Regional Service Centres). Services Australia Regional Service Centres could have the following features:

- a hub and spokes partnership model with shared risk and investment across sectors;
- based at the regional level with spokes into local governance;
- operate on a place-based approach;

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[12] See Jake Chapman's work on the use of targets, notably in: Chapman, J. *System Failure: why governments must learn to think differently.* London. Demos. 2002 and Bentley T and Wilsdon J (Eds). *The Adaptive State*. London, Demos, 2003.

- a co-design approach would be deployed to ensure regional and community ownership;
- focused on delivering key well-being outcomes through a user-first approach with a mandate to upskill regional communities; and,
- through which APS services could be integrated through a whole-of-government approach.
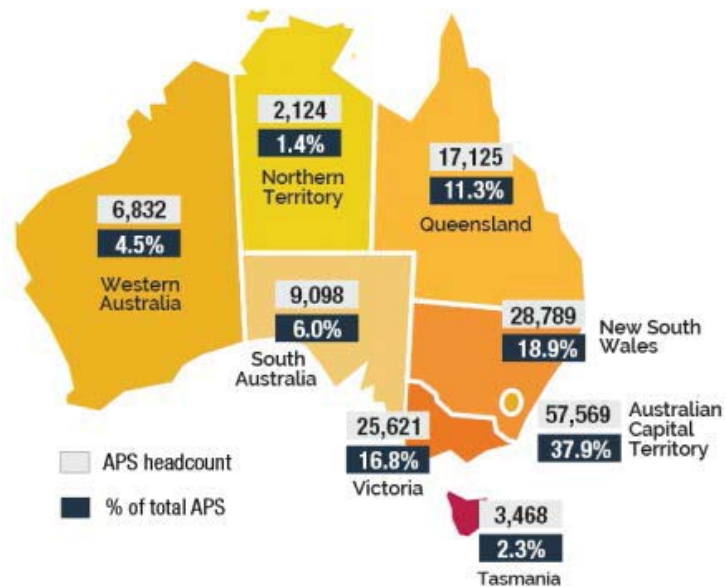
Figure 9. Distribution of APS employees across the APS footprint
(Source: APS Statistical Bulletin 2016-17 – data tables, Table 7a)

Alternatively, Regional Support Centres could be organised around the implementation of regional programs aimed at addressing specific regional problems in social and economic sustainable development but using the same operating features. Victoria's "Collaboration for Impact" provides a useful model in this regard.[13]

It should be recognised, however, that this would a radical departure from orthodoxy for many APS agencies. Australian public servants are measured and rewarded for success in refining processes (for instance, better consultation, less regulation, the monetisation of benefits), or for helping to produce outputs (more nurses, more qualifications achieved, more sustainable businesses) or for managing inputs (a bigger budget for recycling, a 10 percent saving in administrative costs) but are very rarely, if at all recognised for the contribution they make to achieving outcomes. So, there will be significant implications for performance measurement and management arising from this recommendation. Regardless of the model, permanence and cultural authority within the broader system of Australian governance will be important to avoid past failures.

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[13] See: https://collaborationforimpact.com/impacting/initiatives/ (retrieved 20 November 2019).

It was also observed by our workshop participants that there is the potential here for savings. There is considerable waste and duplication within the existing siloed system; but, it has never been properly costed suggesting the need for the Department of Finance to undertake a productivity review of the existing service delivery system.

The budgetary system will also need to be refined to encourage greater collaboration between service delivery agencies. One way of achieving this would be for the Expenditure Review Committee to only accept collaborative New Policy Proposals from service delivery agencies.

The New Zealand Government has been much lauded for achieving significant progress in this area, firstly in consequence of reforms to cope with the Global Financial Crisis and then latterly to ensure more agile, and responsive service delivery.[14] The latest *Kiwis Count Survey* shows New Zealanders have increasing trust in the public service with satisfaction with the provision of services at a record high.[15] The New Zealand case should be closely monitored for progressive lessons.

2.   ESTABLISH AN AUTHENTIC 'CITIZEN-CENTRED' SERVICE CULTURE

What we do know from our findings is that citizens expect a 'user-first' approach for all the services they receive which recognises and understands their personal journeys through the service system. With greater complexity in certain service offerings citizens also expect a more personalised approach with greater client care and support. The APS is making more substantial progress in understanding how to proceed in this area given the path-breaking work of the ATO, DHS, and the DTA, and the investment in design and innovation units, practice guilds and user-simulation labs, whole-of-Commonwealth government.[16]

Continued support to foster this community of practice, encourage a multi-disciplinary approach and stimulate whole-of-government learning remains crucial.[17] With the support of the DTA we would envisage Regional Support Centres developing capability in human-centred design to ensure the delivery of user-centred services.

So, what could a high quality 'citizen-centred' service culture look like? Our focus group participants have given us a strong sense of the four value-based components of trust that they believe inform public trust in Australian public services:

1. **Integrity** – procedural transparency and fairness, competence, consistency of information, advice and treatment

2. **Empathy** – duty of care, respect and understanding

3. **Delivery** – that the service promise will be met

4. **Loyalty** – an expectation of ongoing support and guidance

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[14] See: https://ssc.govt.nz/our-work/reforms/ (retrieved 20 November 2019).
[15] See: https://ssc.govt.nz/our-work/kiwis-count/ (retrieved 20 November 2019).
[16] See: https://www.dta.gov.au/blogs/digital-practice-guilds-government (retrieved 20 November 2019).
[17] See: Boddy, J. and Terrey, N. (2019), *Design for a better future*, Routledge.

These components of trust can be considered micro-psychological contracts between government and citizens and are the key to building service culture. As such, they should be modelled as public service delivery values. Above all, public trust in government services is earnt by delivering on the service promise in a way that values and respects citizen input.

Training programs should be co-designed with frontline staff and citizens to ensure that these four public service delivery values are embedded in practice. Service culture is achieved by people, not by structures or processes. Therefore, we need frontline public servants to want to understand the service delivery strategy, to want to keep it relevant and effective, and who see how their work supports the strategy. There is much evidence that people at the frontline tend to have their own ideas about what they are supposed to achieve[18]. Part of being a strategic organisation rests in finding ways of creating an appetite for strategic working and in aligning the ways that people work at the front line (and of those in the wider community who co-produce outcomes) with the broader strategic goals of the APS.

3. BUILD APS CAPACITY IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND SERVICE CAPABILITY

The achievement of these new ways of working will require new/bolstered capability in areas such as strategic marketing and communication of government services, service advocacy for vulnerable groups, hard and soft service delivery skills, and community engagement.

It appears that much work needs to be in this area suggesting the need for a capability review to ensure that Services Australia Regional Support Centres are fit for purpose.

4. ENSURE CONSISTENT LEVELS OF SERVICE QUALITY

We have a strong message from citizens to "keep it simple, say what you do and do what you say". Our data is very clear in establishing a causal relationship between complexity and declining trust, satisfaction and confidence. The argument that "the legislation is complex so the service is complex" does not sit easily with the citizen. This is viewed as a public service pre-occupation and an excuse for poor delivery.

The way forward inevitably requires establishing a 'single source of truth' across government information, and, reducing the complexity of the service offer, wherever possible. This will require authorisation to exchange and share information between agencies and with the private and community sectors.

5. ENRICH THE SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Once again our evidence is quite clear on what needs to be done to enrich the service experience: embed the four value-based components of trust in public service culture, adopt a user-first approach and

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[18] See Lipsky, M. (1980), *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. New York. Russell Sage Foundation.

introduce a 'tell us once' integrated service system which values the time of the citizen and understands and empathises with their service journeys.

'Low hanging fruit' solutions to enhance the citizen experience could include:

- introduction of greater transparency in setting service expectations from the outset;

- online tracking of service processes available to the user, with timeframes to achieve milestones;

- plain English explanations of the service promise;

- the redesign of application processes for simplification using user-design approaches; and,

- changing the channels of information delivery to focus on target demographics.

6.   CITIZEN-CENTRED SERVICE INNOVATION

The pursuit of citizen-centred innovation is a condition for sustaining continuous improvement in the service system. The creation of Services Australia Regional Support Centres will provide an ongoing opportunity for innovation in areas such as community engagement, digital access and support, the design of collaborative forms of regional governance, the recruitment and development of "trusted" and "local" community service coordinators, and, a practical opportunity to convert complaints to learning and innovation opportunities at the regional scale.

This will require the institutionalisation of innovation and challenge. One of the greatest weaknesses in government is that basic assumptions too often go unchallenged. The most innovative companies in the private sector *encourage* challenge to the received way of doing things. They often employ people not for their manifest desire to conform, but for their potential to offer new ideas, to develop new products, for their ability to 'shake things up'. More established corporations inevitably develop settled hierarchies and systems in much the same way that the civil and other public services do; but larger corporations often find ways of 'institutionalising' challenge, for instance by experimenting with new markets, goods or services through wholly-owned subsidiaries which are left to thrive or sink on their own. Success leads to the adoption of new approaches by the parent firm; failure to (usually) controlled financial losses, and possibly a search for new jobs by those responsible for those losses.

The public sector does not tend to work in this way. In part this is because experimenting with services that are mandated by elected political leaders and on which citizens might depend is unacceptable. The public sector also tends to shy away from challenge and innovation because its norms are of compliance not challenge, and its rewards are for the management of processes and of inputs and outputs, not for outcomes and achievements.

One way that we think government can encourage challenge is institutional. It can emulate the practice of the private sector by 'ring-fencing' challenge functions, for instance by setting-up shadow boards in organisations or service peer review in which service agencies provide developmental feedback to one

another or where cross agency task forces are created to solve common delivery problems.[19] Another way is to systematise reward for innovative thinking. Instead of systems of annual review that reinforce behaviour that is compliant, orthodox and which successfully manage processes at the input/output level of operation, government and the wider public sector needs to actively reward results, however they are achieved.

FUTURE RESEARCH ON TRUST IN GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Our sample of APS leaders made several recommendations for the future development of the *Citizen Experience Survey*. As previously noted, all agreed that there was a need for an ongoing *Citizen Experience Survey* underpinned by a standard whole of APS methodology and administered by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet but thought that this could be supplemented at the agency level with specific service surveys to boost sample size and allow for innovation in areas of particular concern to specific agencies.

In addition, there are at least seven important gaps in our knowledge of the present APS service system in regional Australia that require consideration:

1) The findings of this research are not new, many of these barriers and enablers have been identified over recent decades, although this comprehensive focus on regional citizens does provide novel insights. Given that we have known these challenges for some decades, why has more change not materialised? More research is needed to better understand disconnections in line-of sight whole of Commonwealth government and between jurisdictions and the community sector. What is constraining positive changes in service delivery?

2) There is a lack of coherence around the common purpose, principles and operational parameters governing the present APS service delivery framework. The data reported here demonstrates that staff both anticipate and expect change and they believe a culture shift is looming through the launch of both Services Australia and the APS Review. In the main, morale is fairly good (with some outliers) but a sense of uncertainty about the future is palpable and there are diminished levels of trust between policy owners, program managers and service providers. In sum, the present governing context provides an opportune time for change.

3) We have no data on the views of street level bureaucrats on the strengths, weaknesses and future development of the present service system and yet we know from existing literature that service innovation largely emerges from the frontline.

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[19] The Wales Assembly Government has a 'shadow board', although its role is primarily to air issues and offer alternative perspectives to the main management board (and to encourage staff development) rather than to explicitly challenge organisational assumptions.

4) Despite significant public investment over the past decade, we also have limited evidence on what works in terms of regionally and rurally-based governance structures for coordinating citizen-facing services.

5) We also have limited geospatial mapping of existing service and program delivery. Developing the ability to understand what is being delivered into a community by postcode (or other relevant spatial measure) would provide a powerful planning and decision-making tool. For example, we could use this to map under and over-supply of services in relation to the SEIFA index (see Figure 10).

6) At the core of this change process is the need for better collaborative practice and yet our understanding of what this looks like in practice is limited. A research-practice program could be established to identify and share best-practice collaboration principles.[20]

7) We have limited knowledge about the costs of delivering a siloed approach versus an integrated service approach suggesting the need for the Department of Finance to undertake a productivity review of the existing service delivery system.

8) These are significant gaps in the evidence base that, if bridged, could enable better decision-making on regional service delivery problems and solutions.

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[20] See: Evans, M. (2019), *Discovery Report: Building a culture for change: from "collegiality" to "collaboration",* A joint submission from AusIndustry, Strategic Policy, Economic and Analytical Services and The Science and Commercialisation Division, Department of Industry, Innovation and Science and Evans, M. (2018), *Methodology for Evaluating the Quality of Collaboration*, Canberra, IGPA.
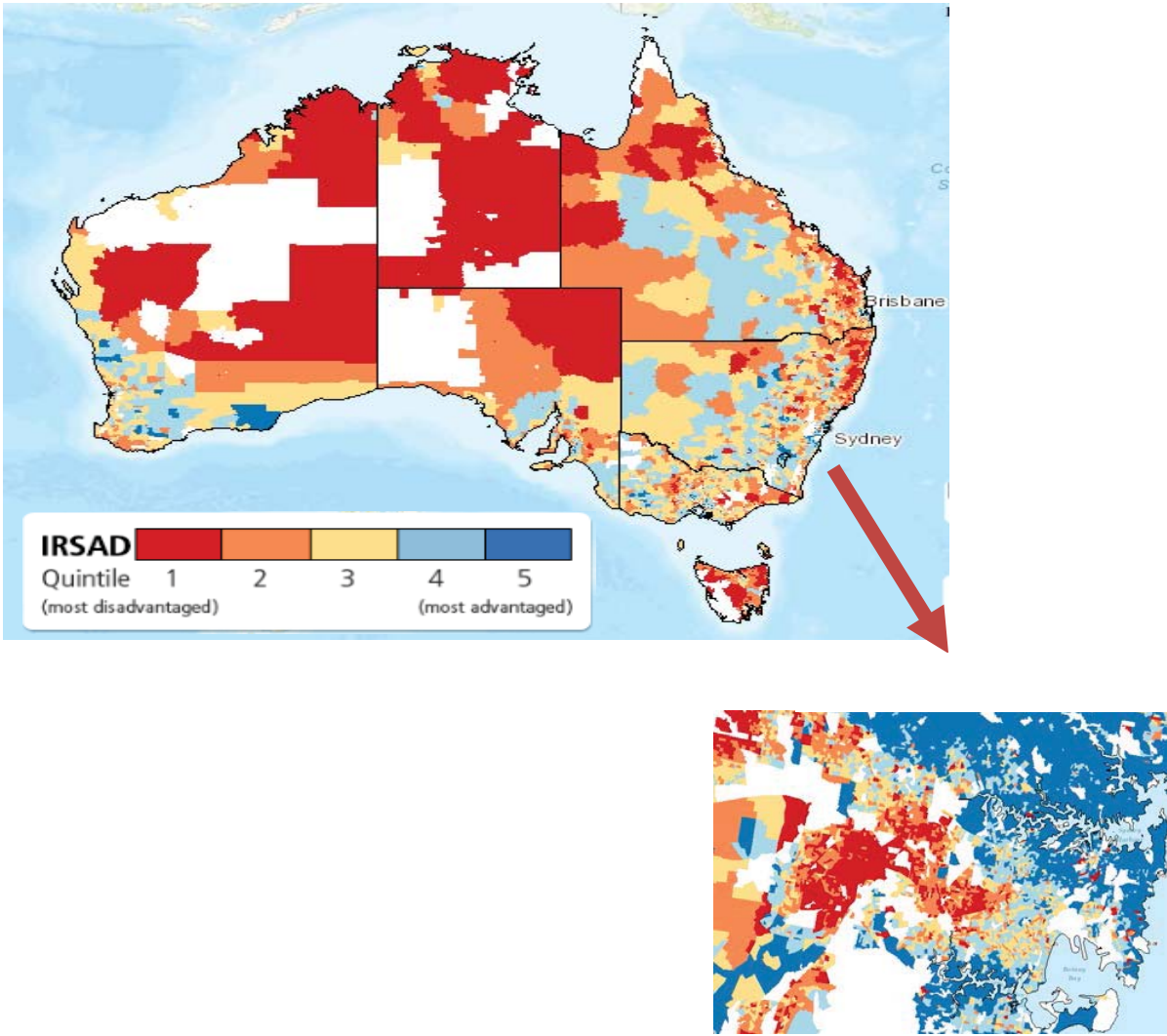
Figure 10. Australian geography of advantage and disadvantage

(Source: ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) 2016. Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) scores)

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APPENDIX 1 – RAPID REVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are witnessing a growing trust divide in Australia which has increased in scope and intensity since 2007. There is widespread concern among scholars and in popular commentary that citizens have grown more distrustful of politicians, sceptical about democratic institutions, and disillusioned with democratic processes or even principles. Indeed, David Thodey, the Chair of the current Review of the Australian Public Service (APS) has highlighted his concern with the trust divide between government and citizen and argued that "Trust is a foundation stone for good [APS] work".[1]

The purpose of this rapid review is fourfold, to investigate: 1) why trust/distrust matters; 2) whether and how declining trust is impacting on public experience of services; 3) how trust influences public behaviour such as the uptake of services; and 4), how the Australian Public Service (APS) can enhance the quality of public service production and use the service experience as a space for trust building. The review evaluates academic and grey literature that addresses these four areas of inquiry and develops a framework for subsequent qualitative research on public service production in regional Australia.

KEY FINDINGS

Defining trust

We understand trust as a relational concept about 'keeping promises and agreements' (Hetherington, 2005). This is in keeping with the OECD's definition where trust is "*holding a positive perception about the actions of an individual or an organization*" (OECD 2017: 16). For the purposes of this study, this would mean that trust in Australian public services requires government to deliver services that citizens' value to a satisfactory level of performance.

Why trust/distrust matters

We discover that there are two main literatures that seek to make sense of these issues – the interdisciplinary literature on political trust and the public management literature on the changing nature of public service production.

With reference to the former literature, we note that weakening political trust: erodes civic engagement and conventional forms of public participation; reduces support for progressive public policies and promotes risk aversion and short-termism in government; and, creates the space for the rise of authoritarian-populist forces.

There are also implications for long-term democratic stability as liberal democratic regimes are thought most durable when built upon popular legitimacy. We also observe that it is extremely

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[1] See S. Easton, "APS Review update: panel leaning towards a small list of big ideas", *The Mandarin*, 7 November 2018. See: https://www.themandarin.com.au/101037-aps-review-panel-update-panel-leaning-towards-a-small-list-of-big-ideas/. Retrieved 21 February 2019.

difficult to divorce public attitudes to politicians from public attitudes towards the quality of public service production.

However, as it is beyond the decision-making authority of the APS to address the problem of declining public trust with politicians, it makes better sense to focus attention on how the APS can deliver the best service experience possible and contribute to bridging the trust divide. This draws us inexorably towards supply-side theories of trust which focus on enhancing the quality of public service production. Trust in public services matters because this is where citizens interact with government and an opportunity is provided for strengthening the quality of democratic governance. Public service design and delivery is a fertile space for trust building.

What do Australians think about the services they receive?

Findings from the Citizen Experience Survey undertaken by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet indicate that despite similar satisfaction rates with public services as urban citizens, and similar levels of effort to access and receive public services, only 27 percent of regional Australians trust Australian government public services, compared with 32 percent of urban citizens. These low levels of trust, despite high levels of satisfaction, highlight that government performance (where here trust in public services is a proxy) is only one factor driving citizen's confidence in government. This observation is in keeping with the secondary literature which views trust as a multi-dimensional problem requiring a broad range of responses.

Barriers and enablers to effective public service delivery

Box i presents an overview of the key barriers and enablers to public service production identified in the review.

Box i. Barriers and enablers to quality public service production

Delivery barriers	Enablers
Lack of proactive engagement from government with users	Personalisation of public services
Users experience difficulty finding the right information, at the right time, in the right context	Establish a single source of truth across government information
Access to services is hindered by the complexity of government structures	Join-up, collaborate simplify and ensure "line of sight"
Users are uncertain about government entitlements and obligations	Proactive engagement from government through strategic communication
Public services are not meeting user service delivery expectations	Create service charters and incentivise performance
Users are being required to provide information multiple times	"Tell us once" – integrated service systems
Inconsistent and inaccessible content	Adopt user-first design principles
Complexity of tools provided by government	Simplify around user needs

The majority of informants we interviewed as a component of this project, argued that a culture shift was required in the way Commonwealth departments and agencies manage and deliver public services to meet the Thodey aspiration of "seamless services and local solutions designed and delivered with states, territories and partners". Although many noted that the process of change was underway. Five specific reform themes loomed large in discussion:

1. Problem seek – see user feedback as an opportunity for progress. Take all complaints seriously and use simulators to make progress (e.g. ATO simulation lab, co-lab). Consider complaints at executive board level with reporting requirements.
2. Use the APS footprint to facilitate whole of APS collaboration in community engagement.
3. Collaborate whole of government in policy design and delivery through shared accountability mechanisms and budgetary incentives.
4. Practice co-(user) design by default and use behavioural insights to improve our understanding of the needs and aspirations of target groups and develop personalised service offerings.
5. Develop opportunities for dynamic engagement with users through inclusive service design and strategic communication.

There is significant evidence to demonstrate that the application of user-first design principles and the personalisation of public services can improve take-up of services and trust in government more broadly.

Indices for the qualitative analysis of public service production in regional Australia

We have therefore designed a set of indices to help us measure the relationship between trust and the quality of public service production. These include:

Trust as Competence (responsiveness and reliability) – the capacity and good judgement to effectively deliver the agreed goods/mandate;

Trust as Values (integrity, transparency and fairness) – the underpinning intentions and principles that guide actions and behaviours;

Trust as Satisficing – the degree to which citizens' expectations of a service have been satisfied.

The review concludes by acknowledging that trust is a complex and multi-dimensional concept with many of these dimensions overlapping in practice. It therefore synthesises and clarifies the various drivers and dimensions of trust into a single trust framework (see Figure 5). In this framework we recognise the importance of trust in government, providing a feedback loop between trust in public service production and trust in government. We describe a citizen's expectations of a public service not as a block box, but as an array of micro-contracts, each with their own conditions of satisfaction and levels of importance.

INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

The Australian economy has experienced twenty-seven years of economic growth. A remarkable performance that is unprecedented both historically and in comparison with other OECD countries over the period. Yet, during the same time Australia has suffered a period of democratic decline and the depth of that decline has increased dramatically since 2007 (Stoker et al., 2018a). The level of democratic satisfaction has decreased steadily across each government from 86 percent in 2007 (Howard), to 72 percent in 2010 (Rudd), 72 percent in 2013 (Abbott) and 41 percent in July 2018 under Malcolm Turnbull. Australia's least trusted institutions are: political parties (16%), web based media (20%), print media (29%), trade unions (30%), federal government (31%) and television media (32%). Australia's least trusted professions are: MPs (21%), government ministers (23%), trade unionists (26%) and journalists (28%). And more than 60 percent of Australians believe the honesty and integrity of politicians is low. In contrast, public servants are one of our most trusted professions (39%) after judges (56%) and GPs (81%).

The decline in democratic satisfaction is not peculiar to Australia but what is remarkable is that it is occurring in a period of affluence. It is unsurprising, for example, that certain European countries impacted by the worst excesses of the Global Financial Crisis and austerity politics should turn away from the established political order and look for a new form of populist politics. But apart from the evident rise in citizen expectations of government, why is this happening in Australia? Is it being experienced differently in urban, regional and rural Australia? And, what impact is it having on public experience of Australian public services?

PURPOSE

This rapid review investigates academic and grey literature that address four areas of inquiry: 1) explanation of what drives or undermines trust; 2) evidence of whether and how declining trust is impacting on public experience of services; 3) evidence of how trust influences public behaviour such as the uptake of services; and 4), how the Australian Public Service (APS) can enhance the quality of public service production and use the service experience as a space for trust building.

The cumulative compilation of this evidence base will help the 'Understanding public trust in Australian public services across regional Australia' project better understand the drivers, barriers and enablers of public trust in the delivery of Australian public services in regional areas. In combining practical service delivery guidelines from the literature and a comprehensive understanding of how trust is built, this project will provide a valuable contribution to understanding regional service delivery through a nuanced lens of theory and practice.

4

STRUCTURE

The review is organized into five sections which combine to provide a cumulative understanding of trust in government and public services.

Section 1 provides an operational definition of trust to inform subsequent empirical work, explores the nature and relevance of the trust problem in the context of the operations of contemporary democracies and presents a case for why trust in government and by implication public services is important.

Section 2 outlines various demand and supply side theories that can help explain what is driving trust or its absence and demonstrates that trust is a multi-dimensional, "wicked" problem that requires a broad range of responses.

Section 3 reviews the evidence on public perceptions of the quality of the supply of public services in Australia.

Section 4 assesses the quality of the management of public services in Australia.

And Section 5, presents a conceptual frame, key indicators and research questions to guide qualitative research on the quality of public service production in regional Australia.

1. DEFINING AND VALUING TRUST

Before we can seek to understand the drivers of trust for public services in regional Australia, we first need to understand what we mean by trust. Trust is a complex, multi-dimensional concept with no agreed definition within the literature. However, there is sufficient common ground to understand trust as a relational concept about 'keeping promises and agreements' (Hetherington, 2005). The OECD's comprehensive review of trust and public policy provides a slightly more detailed definition of this understanding of trust where trust is "*holding a positive perception about the actions of an individual or an organization*" (OECD 2017: 16). For the purposes of this study, this would mean that trust in Australian public services requires government to deliver services that citizens' value to a satisfactory level of performance.

While this OECD definition provides a useful starting point, it is important to acknowledge that there are various additional dimensions of trust that are relevant to this study. For example, trust can be categorized based on 'what' is being trusted such as interpersonal trust which is about trust in other people and typically based on their adherence to shared values and/or norms, or institutional trust (systemic trust) which is about having trust in institutions or organisations to behave in a fair and honest manner (OECD 2009 & 2017). Similarly, trust can be categorized by how it is formed, cognitive trust for example is based on rational or experience-based perceptions (see: OECD 2017; and McKnight, Cummings, and Chervany 1998), while affective trust is informed by an individual's emotions (OECD, 2017).

Given that the delivery of public services is an individual experience and often involves personal interactions with front-line service providers (i.e. via telephone, email, or face to face), all these forms of trust are potentially valuable when attempting to understand public trust in public services. Interpersonal and emotional trust is invoked in dealing with service providers while cognitive trust is determined based on the experience of the service delivery process and outcomes, all of which may combine to cast judgement on the level of *institutional trust* to be granted. These indicators of trust in public services will be discussed further in Section 5.

It is also important to recognise that trust is not an objective measure of government performance (Welch et al., 2004). Rather, trust is a subjective cognitive reflection of citizen perceptions based on available information and experience (Kim et al., 2017). As Sims (2001), observes citizen perceptions of government performance can be highly flawed as they are often shaped by media framing of contemporary issues and the public's impressions based on poor information and personal prejudices. As such, trust is a complex and potentially "wicked" problem with multiple dimensions and causes (Stoker et al., 2018b).

WHY IS TRUST IN GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES IMPORTANT?

There are at least three main reasons why a lack of trust may be problematic. First, it can undermine political engagement. Martin's (2010) pioneering work in Australia shows that lack of trust impacts on levels of confidence in democracy, willingness to vote and take up of protest style activities and concludes that 'the consequences of low levels of political trust may not be as dire as some feared...

(but that) … there are grounds for concern'. Lack of trust in mainstream politics is a key factor in pushing citizens towards more populist alternatives. Second, lack of trust may make the general business of government harder to deliver. Marien and Hooghe (2011) using data from European countries, find that low political trust is strongly correlated with citizens' willingness to tolerate illegal behaviour and potentially commit criminal acts themselves. Hetherington (2005) has expanded on these concerns to explore the impact of lack of trust on limiting what policy issues government can effectively tackle concluding that 'scholars have demonstrated that declining trust has had important effects, mostly undermining liberal domestic policy ambitions…. Put simply, people need to trust the government to support more government'. Third, lack of political trust may make long-term policy problems less likely to be addressed. Politicians may also feel they lack the legitimacy necessary to request sacrifices from citizens (of the kind often required to solve major policy problems).

Trust requires integrity in practice and accountability for delivery; where trust is lacking the general business of government is much harder to deliver. Put simply, people need to trust the government to support more government (see Marien and Hooghe, 2011; OECD 2017).

In general then, trust is viewed to be integral for effective government. Trust stabilizes the relationship between government and citizens, providing the glue that facilitates cooperation on the provision of collective goods (Stoker et al. 2018; Van Ryzin 2011), compliance with rules (Van Ryzin 2011), democratic inclusion and ultimately social cohesion (OECD 2017; Miranti and Evans 2017; Stoker et al. 2018a).

Public services as a space for trust building

Evidence in the literature also indicates that high quality public services can lead to satisfied citizens and consequently improved trust in government (see: Van de Walle and Bouckaert, 2003; Yang and Holzer, 2006 in OECD 2017 p.48). This 'micro-performance hypothesis' linking public service delivery to trust in government is supported by Australian-based research which shows that public trust is partly shaped by citizen perceptions of the performance of government; particularly the quality of the provision of public services (Stoker et al., 2018b and Rothstein 2018). Here trust in government is viewed to be the glue that provides functional citizen–government relationships (Kearns 2004) and is essential for the achievement of stable governance systems and features such as:[2]

➢ Compliance with laws and regulations
➢ Cooperation in the provision of collective goods
➢ Reduced transaction costs as it is not necessary to constantly monitor behaviour
➢ Effective political engagement
➢ Legitimacy to act on long-term policy problems
➢ Confidence in the government to deliver basic functions

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[2] See for example: Levi and Stoker,2000; Kim et al 2017; Tolbert & Mossberger, 2006; Welch et al., 2004; Martin 2010; Evans and Stoker, 2016; Marien and Hooghe 2011; Hetherington and Husser 2012; Jacobs and Matthews 2011; Evans, Halupka, and Stoker 2017; Gyorffy 2013; Stoker et al., 2018b; Van Ryzin 2011; and Bovaird 2007.

- Market confidence
- Social cohesion
- Effective crisis response and cooperation during emergency situations
- Leadership on key geopolitical issues

Better understanding trust in public services is therefore important because as the OECD (2017: 4) puts it – *"trust is not only an indicator of success: it is, more significantly, one of the ingredients that makes success – for a business or for a government – possible."* Trust in public services matters because this is where citizens interact with government and an opportunity is provided for strengthening the quality of democratic governance (Van Ryzin 2011).

2.   SUPPLY AND DEMAND-SIDE THEORIES OF TRUST

There is no one simple explanation for what drives or undermines trust. The research on the issue is one of the most voluminous in the social sciences and has been a concern in many countries for decades. The literature can be loosely organised around demand-side and supply-side theories of trust (Stoker and Evans, 2018).

Demand-side theories focus on how much individuals trust government and democratic politics and explore the key characteristics of the citizenry. What is it about citizens, such as their educational background, class, location, country or cohort of birth that makes them trusting or not? What are the barriers to citizen engagement? And what makes citizens feel that that their participation could deliver value? In general, the strongest predictors of distrust continue to be attitudinal and are connected to negativity about politics.[3]

Demand-side interventions therefore focus on overcoming various barriers to social, economic or political participation (or well-being). Most interventions tend to focus on dealing with issues of social disadvantage through education, labour market activation, public participation, improved representation, place-based service delivery and other forms of empowerment such as the provision of citizenship education to enhance political literacy (see Table 1).[4]

Supply-side theories of trust start from the premise that public trust must in some way correspond with the trustworthiness of government. The argument here is that it is the performance (supply) of government that matters most in orienting the outlooks of citizens, together with its commitment to procedural fairness and quality.

Supply-side interventions therefore seek to enhance the integrity of government and politicians, and the quality and procedural fairness of service delivery or parliamentary processes through open government or good governance. This normally includes transparency, accountability, public service competence and anti-corruption measures (see Table 1).

A further challenge in bridging the divide between citizens and government is that reforms that seem to provide part of the solution can sometimes make the problem worse. Offering more participation or consultation can turn into a tokenistic exercise, which generates more cynicism and

Table 1. A selection of demand and supply-side interventions to address the trust divide

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[3] For a review of this literature see Levi, M and Stoker, L. (2000), 'Political Trust and Trustworthiness', Annual Review of Political Science, 3: 475–507. 14. The standard work here is Verba S., Schlozman K., Brady H. (1995), Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics. Cambridge: Harvard. For a framework designed for reformers see Lowndes, V, Pratchett, L and Stoker, G (2006), 'Diagnosing and Remedying the Failings of Official Participation Schemes: The Clear Framework,' Social Policy & Society 5:2, 1–11. For recent updates see: Evans, M. & Pratchett, L. (2013), 'The Localism Gap – the CLEAR failings of official consultation in the Murray Darling Basin', Policy Studies, 34, 5/6: 541-558 and, Dalton, R.J (2017), The Participation Gap. Social Status and Political Inequality. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[4] See Torney-Purta, J., Lehmann, R., Oswald, H., & Schulz, W. (2001), *Citizenship and education in twenty-eight countries: Civic knowledge and engagement at age fourteen*, Amsterdam, the Netherlands: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

PROBLEM	INTERVENTION	DESIGN PRINCIPLES
Demand side problems and solutions		
Need for education to increase understanding and capacity of citizens	Better Citizenship education	Input through programs of "learning and doing" will build citizens who are confident and pragmatic enough to build trust
Citizens/stakeholders want more of a say as they become more challenging and critical	Quality participation	Contingent on the purpose of the engagement. Varied with different foci on hard to reach groups, deliberation and selection by sortition. Having a say in a decision increases the prospects of trust
Opportunities to exploit capacity created by new technologies	Internet politics	Build on surge and waves of interest to deliver rapid responses to public concerns and build trust
Supply side problems and solutions		
If government did the small things in service delivery well this would improve levels of trust to tackle bigger problems	Improve the quality of service delivery	User-centred design, use innovation and new technology to increase customer satisfaction and improve performance in measurable ways
Closed government, corrupt practices	Open government and indicative transparency measures	People trust processes that are clear, transparent and accountable. Focus on driving out the practice and even the appearance of corruption or malpractice
Representative democracy has lost legitimacy because of the financing of parties and elections and the representative failings and poor practices of elected assemblies	Improved citizen-party linkage	Regulation of election spending, reform of party system, change parliamentary practices
The way that political choices and decisions are presented through new and traditional media creates a climate of distrust	Communication dynamics	Encourage through soft regulation and influence support changes in communication to better manage tension between freedom of media and a better governance context

negativity among citizens. The conclusion from much of the academic and practice-based literature is not that more participation is needed but that better participation is needed (Evans, 2014).[5]

Given that the Citizen Experience project focuses on how we can use the public service experience as a space for trust building between government and citizen our attention is best placed on the supply-side literature.

ENHANCING PUBLIC SERVICE PERFORMANCE

If the focus is on the performance of government to build trust one suggestion is that the best way forward is to do service delivery better. Public management reform advocates argue that "there's a powerful – and positive – case that government officials can improve government's standing by treating their citizens in trust-earning ways".[6] These strategies might involve demonstrating good performance, creating positive customer experiences and transparently demonstrating the effort and commitment that goes into public service. Others might see improved digital capacity and service as a way of building trust in government;[7] although some evidence suggests that it is possible to boost the standing of the agency involved but not necessarily government as a whole.[8]

However, it should be noted that providing performance data – the bread and butter of modern government – so that citizens can judge if promises have been kept does not always produce more trust. Rather, it can lead to government officials trying to manipulate the way citizens judge their performance. Positive data is given prominence, less helpful data sometimes hidden. On the ground, frontline public servants and many citizens find the claims of success contrasting with their own more negative experiences. Far from promoting trust, the packaging of performance may in fact have contributed to the emergence of populism and loss of trust by citizens.[9]

Nonetheless, there is significant support within the literature for the micro-performance hypothesis; that by improving public services we can improve trust in government due to improved satisfaction and associated attitudes towards government, with Guerrero (2011) going as far as saying that the performance of public services is a predictor of trust in government.[10] As explained by Hetherington (1998) and Morgeson and colleagues (2010), public services are a component of the government and hence trust towards public services should help reinforce trust in the government as a whole.

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[5] For a detailed account of different methods of public participation see: Involve Organisation (UK), (2005), 'People and Participation. How to put the citizens at the heart of decision-making', London, Involve. Retrieved 15 May 2019 from: https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/publications/ practical-guidance/people-and-participation.

[6] Kettl, D. (2017), *Can Government Earn Our Trust*? Cambridge: Polity Press, p.120

[7] Parent, M., C. A. Vandebeek, and A. C. Gemino (2005), 'Building citizen trust through E-government', *Government Information Quarterly* 22:720–36.

[8] Morgeson, F., VanAmburg and Mithas, S (2011), 'Misplaced Trust? Exploring the Structure of the E-Government-Citizen Trust Relationship', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Volume 21, 2: 257–283.

[9] See Christina Boswell (2018), *Manufacturing Political Trust*. NY: CUP.

[10] See: Glaser & Hildreth, 1999; Kampen et al., 2003; Van de Walle & Bouckaert, 2003; Christensen and Laegreid 2005; Yang and Holzer, 2006; Morgeson et al 2010; Van Ryzin 2011; Kettl 2017; and OECD 2017.

3. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE QUALITY OF THE SUPPLY OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN AUSTRALIA

This section focuses on reviewing the findings of specific APS survey research which has sought to evaluate public perceptions of the quality of Australian public service production. Four sources of data are considered including key findings from: 1) PM&C's Citizen Experience Survey; 2) Telstra's 2017 Connected Government Survey; 3) the Digital Transformation Agency's (DTA) GovX team's recent work on "common pain points" experienced by the public in their interaction with government services; and 4) the recent 2019 review of business.gov.au in the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science (DIIS). The findings are integrated in response to two questions: what do Australians think about the services they receive? And, do Australians have preferences in terms of delivery systems?

WHAT DO AUSTRALIANS THINK ABOUT THE SERVICES THEY RECEIVE?

Preliminary findings from the Citizen Experience Survey undertaken by PM&C indicates that when comparing experiences of people in regional and remote areas compared to those in urban areas (i.e. major cities), there are similar satisfaction rates with public services, and similar levels of effort to access and receive public services, but only 27 percent of regional Australians trust Australian government public services, compared with 32 percent of urban citizens. These low levels of trust, despite high levels of satisfaction, highlight that government performance (where here trust in public services is a proxy) is only one factor driving citizen's confidence in government (Sims 2001). Rather, government performance – and with it citizens trust in public services, trust in government and trust in democracy – is the result of complex interacting processes which reach beyond service delivery, including: policy and program design which attempts to reconcile diverging interests and balance numerous political and resource constraints; media framing of government performance; and, the behaviour of political elites (Sims 2001; Stoker et al. 2018b). Box 1 presents an overview of the key findings from the Citizen Experience Survey demonstrating that we cannot rely on the proposition that trust is an outcome of citizen expectations of a service and satisfaction with a service (see for example Morgeson 2012; OECD 2017).

Nonetheless, it is also evident that through the use of user-first principles of service design it is possible to identify common problems in the public's experience of service. The DTA GovX team (2019), for example, has conducted a "common pain points" project with target groups of citizens which analyses "how people interact with government as they experience different events in their life, such as looking for work or caring for a loved one". The findings provide a set of action points for improving the quality of the service experience (see Box 2). We will revisit these in the next section.

Box 1. Key findings from the Citizen Experience Survey

❖ Satisfaction (54%) with service outcomes is higher than trust (29%).
❖ 60 per cent of respondents are "non-aligned"; neither "trusting" or "distrusting".
❖ Service experience during significant life events affect trust in the APS.
❖ Personal individual service delivery experiences drive overall trust.
❖ Australians trust the APS to use their data responsibly, but don't trust them to store it securely.
❖ Trust is lower in regional (28%) in contrast to urban (34%) areas.

DO AUSTRALIANS HAVE PREFERENCES IN TERMS OF DELIVERY SYSTEMS?

We recently conducted a national survey for Telstra on Australian attitudes towards digital public service production[11] and we found that: there is a sustained willingness amongst the Australian citizenry to use online services and a preference for on-line services over other delivery channels; the public sector is still perceived to be behind the private sector on key measures of service delivery but Australian citizens want digital services and don't really care whether they are delivered by public or private sector organisations; confidence in government to deliver effective public policy outcomes is very low but there is a belief that digitisation could be used as an effective tool for rebuilding trust with the citizenry; and, the vast majority of the Australian public endorsed and

Box 2. Common pain points in government-citizen interaction

Lack of proactive engagement from government with the user	Difficulty finding the right information, at the right time, in the right context	Services hindered by the complexity of government structure
Uncertainty about government entitlements and obligations	Not meeting service delivery expectations	Users being required to provide information multiple times
Inconsistent & inaccessible content	Complexity of tools provided by government	

Source: DTA GovX 2019

expected the APS to engage in experimentation and service innovation (see Figure 1). Table 2 presents a snapshot of satisfaction drivers by channel in the Department of Human Services. In contrast, it shows that "face to face" channels remain the most effective driver of citizen satisfaction; although it is equally evident that the mix of channels is important to respond to the different needs of citizens.

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[11] Evans, M. and Halupka, M. (2017), *Telstra Connected Government Survey: Delivering Digital Government: the Australian Public Scorecard*, retrieved 19 May 2019 from: https://insight.telstra.com.au/ deliveringdigitalgovernment.

In the first quarter of 2019 a review was conducted of Business.gov.au in DIIS.[12] The purpose of the review was to assess whether the needs and aspirations of small and family business owners are being supported effectively by business.gov.au and to provide recommendations on how the

Figure 1. Public perceptions across sectors and channel preference for public service delivery
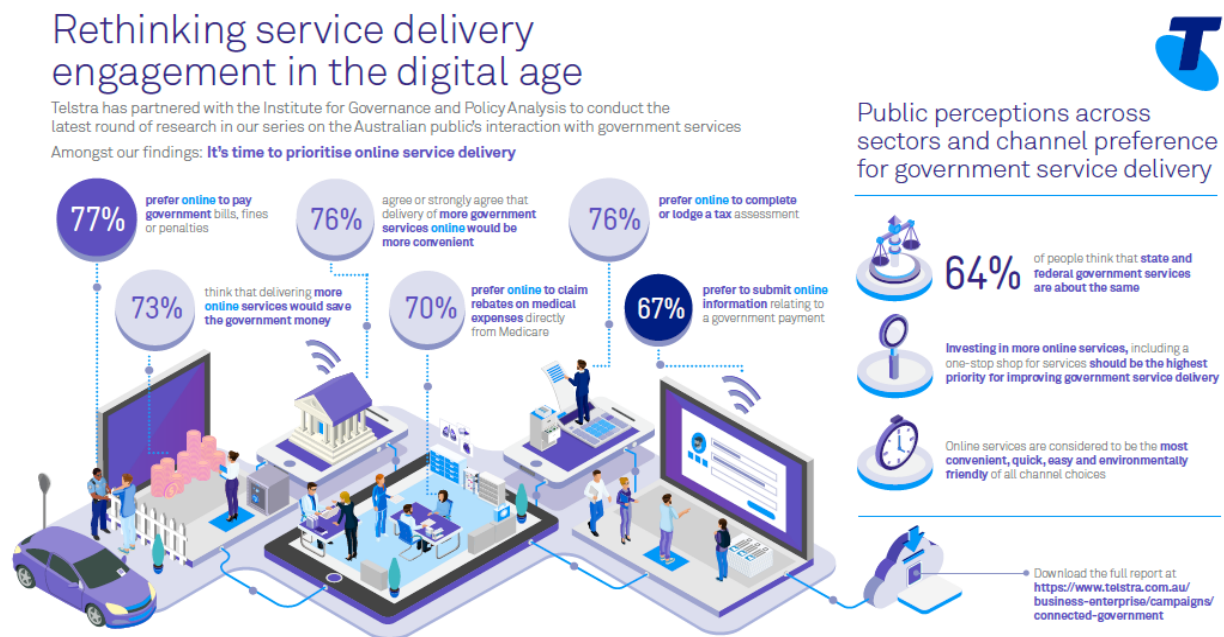
service experience could be enhanced. The recommendations draw on quantitative surveys of small business users conducted by the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science in 2013, 2015 and 2017 (Winning Moves, 2017). The research provides us with some key lessons for the public service system as a whole in relation to digital service delivery:

1. User centred design is critical to delivering a high quality service experience.
2. Small business owners want a trusted, one-stop shop to access the government information and assistance that they need. It should not mirror government internal structures (federal, state, local) and content should not be dispersed across multiple agencies, platforms and technologies (various applications and websites). Hence digital services should have a clear vision and scope.
3. Small business owners expect on-line services to be accessible from a range of devices and easily navigable (functionality).
4. Small business owners desire relevant and practical content that is tailored for their personal and user journey (personalisation).
5. Appropriate channels of communication should be used to heighten awareness of the service. Although satisfaction with business.gov.au is high (93%), awareness is low (44%).

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[12] Small Business Advisory Group Report (2019), *Unlocking the Potential of Business.gov.au*, Canberra, DIIS.

Intermediaries (in this case accountants, bookkeepers, business advisers, and industry and professional associations are key points of contact for small business) can be better leveraged to push out relevant information that meets user needs.

Table 2. A snapshot of satisfaction drivers by channel in the Department of Human Services

	Centrelink				Child support	Medicare
Driver	Face to face	Phone	Online	Mobile Apps	Phone	Face to Face
Perceived quality	79.9	74.9	70.7	78.8		
Personalised service	83.7	80.3	N/A	N/A	81.2	91.5
Communication	83.1	80.5	77.3	82.2	82.9	92.6
Time to receive service	71.5	51.7	71.6	78.5	58.7	71.1
Fair treatment	91.5	90.9	N/A	N/A	85.6	94.4
Effort	77.9	67.5	68.4	77.1	70.4	83.2
KPI result	81.2	74.1	72.0	79.0	79.0	86.1

Source: Senate Estimates July 2018 to February 2019
*mobile Apps as a channel added from October 2018
n.b. work is underway to include the online channels for Child Support and Medicare

SUMMARY

The data presented in this section is in keeping with the core findings from the secondary literature on the take-up of digital public services. For example, Carter and Belanger (2005) found that trustworthiness of e-government services influenced service uptake; and, Lee and Turban (2001) observed that citizens need to trust both the agency and the technology.

The broader literature on public service delivery in regional areas does provide some guidance for further consideration of the potential to improve trust and the delivery of public services in regional Australia. Roufeil and Battye's (2008) review of regional, rural and remote family and relationships service delivery highlights some significant challenges, but also points to the potential enabling factor of good trust between service providers and the communities – better service delivery is possible. They also highlight the importance of bespoke place-based delivery, that services cannot be delivered in rural areas like they are in urban areas as an important consideration (see also RAI 2015 who also emphasises flexibility in policy delivery and effective multi-level government governance arrangements).

This observation also suggests that it has become imperative for the Commonwealth Government to join-up social and economic development programs and services around regional development hubs to target and alleviate increased marginalisation.

4.   MANAGING PUBLIC SERVICES IN AUSTRALIA

This section focuses on the question *how can the APS improve the management of public services*? It draws on three main sources: the public management literature on better practice in delivering integrated public services in Westminster style democracies; findings from the DTA GovX team's "common pain points" project; and preliminary findings from a set of interviews conducted for this project with APS thought leaders on how to improve the quality of public service production in Australia.

This will help us to identify the barriers to integrated service delivery in Westminster style democracies. It reviews a broad range of grey (practice-based) and academic based literature crystallised around two key issues that emerged from our findings in the previous section. Firstly, to identify the qualities of an ideal-type service delivery framework which will provide us with a benchmark for assessing the current state of play. Secondly, we will see that the establishment of integrated service delivery is seen as synonymous with achieving "line of sight" i.e. "Line of sight" is achieved when there is a clear line between the delivery of public services in the community and the high-level goals the organisation has set itself. Hence in this sub section we will focus on what stands in the way of achieving "line of sight" and being strategic in public service delivery.

WHAT DOES AN IDEAL-TYPE SERVICE DELIVERY FRAMEWORK LOOK LIKE?

A service delivery framework (SDF) normally sets out the principles, standards, policies and operational constraints to be used to guide the design, development, deployment, operation and termination of services delivered by a service provider with a view to offering a consistent quality of service experience to a specific user community. For example, the 2008 Australian Government Service Delivery Framework (AGSDF) provides a whole of government roadmap to assist agencies to recognise and exploit the opportunities available for innovative and collaborative service delivery. Its purpose is therefore to achieve "line of sight" between goals, policies, programs, services and their achievement and generate public value.[13]

The most common strategic elements that are used to build an effective SDF include:

➢ **Service culture** – normally directed by the host Department's strategic vision and delivered through its leadership principles, APS values, business processes and performance framework. Once a service delivery system and realistic service level agreements have been established, there is no other component more integral to the long-term success of a service organization as its culture.

➢ **Organisational capacity and capability** – even the best designed processes and systems will only be effective if carried out by organisations with the capacity, and people with the capability, to deliver. Organisational capacity and capability are key determinants of service

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[13] See: https://www.finance.gov.au/publications/delivering-australian-government-services-access-and-distribution-strategy/framework.html. Accessed 19 May 2019.

excellence. In cases where services are augmented through forms of collaborative governance with States, territories or the community sector a focus needs to be placed on evaluating the quality of collaboration.

➢ **Service quality** – includes strategies, processes and performance management systems. The strategy and process design is fundamental to the design of the overall service management model.

➢ **Service experience** – involves elements of user intelligence, account management and continuous improvement. Successful service delivery works on the basis that the user/stakeholder is part of the creation and delivery of the service and then designs processes built on that philosophy – this is called co-creation or co-design.

➢ **Service innovation and forward thinking** – ensures that the organization has access to a strong evidence base on what works and has developed innovation systems to allow it to build effective knowledge networks to co-create new service products to stay ahead of the game.

By implication our qualitative inquiry should be cognisant of whether these five elements are effectively integrated within current service systems and achieving line of sight between goals, policies, programs, services and their achievement.[14]

ACHIEVING "LINE OF SIGHT" AND BEING STRATEGIC

The term strategy is very much part of the vocabulary of Westminster civil and public services but it is used quite indiscriminately. It is attached to a wide variety of statements without much apparent thought and often used only to confer importance and seriousness. Moreover, there is little analysis of the impact of strategic working on policy outcomes.[15]

Strategic organisations develop an understanding of their likely future operating environments. This brings obvious advantages for companies in the private sector, helping them to develop new markets, goods and services in advance of competitors and to increase profitability. For government, whether at national, departmental, state, regional, agency, local or sectoral level, a stronger understanding of potential futures gives it the capability to track which future is emerging, enabling organisations and policies to be more robust and resilient. Many parts of government do use strategic analysis to improve their planning and performance. But it is not a sufficient ambition for government simply to understand how to survive in a particular future. The job of government

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[14] For key research in this area see: Ansell, C. and Gash, A. (2008), 'Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol.18, No.4, pp.543-571; Dunleavy, P. (2010), *The future of joined-up public services.* 2020 Public Services Trust and ESRC, London, UK; Halligan, J. (2011), 'You win some, you lose some: experiments with joined-up government', *International Journal of Public Administration,* 34(4), 244-54; Hill, M. and Hupe, P. (2003), 'The multi-layer problem in implementation research', *Public Management Review*, 5, 4, 471-490; and, Schofield, J. & C. Sausman (2004), "Symposium on Implementing Public Policy: Learning from Theory and Practice: Introduction", *Public Administration* 82, 2, 235-248.

[15] Boaz A, Solesbury, W. (2007), *Strategy and Politics: The Example of the United Kingdom* in *The Strategy of Politics* Eds. T. Fischer, G. P. Schmitz and M. Seberich. Gütersloh Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung p. 130.

is to *change the future*, that is, to set-out a vision of a desired future and, through policies and achievement of those policies, to bring that future about. This is also a key component of its stewardship role which differentiates the permanent bureaucracy from the political class. Indeed this is the key difference between strategy work in the private sector – which is about optimal performance and profitability for their own organisations in whichever future comes about, and in the public sector – which is about achieving better outcomes for citizens. To make strategic thinking and delivery a reality, the political (elected) leadership of organisations and the permanent (unelected) leadership have to share an understanding of how to work strategically, not simply with each other but with their organisations and the world beyond.

Outcomes-based policy is more likely to motivate those who will achieve the results government seeks; front-line workers and citizens themselves. We find from our review of the literature that the theory of public value is posited as a helpful way of testing whether outcomes will enjoy the confidence of ministers and other accountable leaders.[16] Public value comprises three main components: *services, trust and outcomes*. One of the difficulties working in a government department or in many other parts of the public sector is that employees tend to be measured and rewarded for success in refining processes (for instance, better consultation, less regulation, the monetisation of benefits), or for helping to produce outputs (more nurses, more qualifications achieved) or for managing inputs (a bigger budget for recycling, a ten per cent saving in administrative costs) but are very rarely recognised for the contribution they make to achieving outcomes.

What is it that government organisations exist to achieve? The Roads to Recovery Programme supports 'the maintenance of the nation's local road infrastructure asset, which facilitates greater access for Australians and improved safety, economic and social outcomes"; the Army exists to win wars and keep the peace; Medicare exists to treat illness and promote health; schools exist to educate young people and help them to realise their full potential. When we express each of these aims in outcome terms, we release greater potential for the achievement of public value.

For instance: 'People are able to travel by road safely and without delay'; 'People live in a safe and secure world, with strong international institutions that keep the peace and uphold human dignity'; 'People know how to stay healthy and receive effective treatment when they fall ill'; 'Young people are motivated to learn and are supported in their learning by able teachers who help them to develop the skills and knowledge they need to fulfil their potential'.

Schools cannot alone improve education. Children and parents and peer groups are crucial to learning, so the outcome must be co-produced, not simply 'delivered' by schools. Similarly, highways alone cannot ensure that people travel speedily and safely; the amount of drivers and their behaviour, the nature of the vehicles that we use; the necessity to travel or the ability and inclination to work from home all contribute to the outcome.

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[16] The best-known exponent of the theory of public value is probably Professor Mark Moore of Kennedy School of Government, Harvard. See: Moore, M *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1995. See also the work of Gerry Stoker (2006) on its application to the UK context.

Once an organisation has a strategic vision and a set of policies working to achieve that vision, it then needs to look at itself. The implementation of a strategic vision almost always requires change: change in the activities and behaviours of staff and of the organisation as a whole, including of budget allocations. If a strategy is constructed properly then it will be possible to construct objectives, indicators and feedback mechanisms that will enable government to measure and report on whether the outcomes are being achieved, not only by the organisation itself but by the wider delivery system. This is important so that the organisation can use public money efficiently and effectively. Accountability to the public, when handled honestly and accurately, can in turn build public value by increasing trust.

Any organisation should be able to express its reason for existence in a single sentence. For the supermarket Coles this is: "*To offer real value to our customers by lowering the price of the weekly shopping basket, improving quality through fresher produce and delivering an easier, better shopping experience every day of the week*"; for DIIS it is: "*To enable growth and productivity for globally competitive industries".* In each case the statement of core purpose should be the product of a strategic process that has meaning for the organisation's customers, staff and stakeholders. (Note: statements like 'We will be the best at x' or 'We will be the leading provider of Y' are ineffective statements of core purpose, because they offer no definition of what the organisation stands for).

In summary, to create strategy in government we need an understanding of plausible potential futures, a desired vision of the future, a set of outcomes that create public value, organisational alignment and allocation of resources throughout the delivery system to support achievement of those outcomes, together with accountability and feedback mechanisms to measure attainment, plus clear core purpose. These together can give us 'line of sight': a way for leaders – both political and permanent – to see the links between strategic aims and intent, policy processes and delivery and achievement at the front line – and a way for the front line and citizens to see exactly the same things.

Typical barriers to achieving "Line of Sight" and being strategic

So what makes it so hard to be strategic in delivering services? The literature suggests that there are at least six main areas where difficulties arise in the implementation of public services.

> *Delivery burdens.* Daily operational pressures (the 24/7 media cycle, the three year electoral cycle) on both the political and permanent leadership can tend to 'squeeze' strategic working out of the system.

> *Analysis.* Strategic analysis can either be too short term and trend-based to help steer the organisation or too far-fetched and improbable to hold the attention of policy-makers.

> *Poor "Line of sight".* Strategy work can seem to be exclusively about high-level goals, or it can seem to be purely about a particular set of policies, or it can appear to be a preoccupation with functional strategies or with delivery planning. Line of sight is achieved when there is a clear line between delivery in the community and the high-level goals the

organisation has set itself. This requires the strong integration of policy, programmes and delivery.

➢ *Product but not enough process.* Strategies that create change within organisations and in the world beyond are the result of a process driven by those who work in the organisation and its stakeholders. Yet too often they are simply documents produced by a small group or by consultants which do not create new understanding, still less change. These strategies act like tightropes, from which the organisation must eventually fall, rather than as a compass enabling it to set and re-set its direction. This suggests the need for inclusively generated change management process with clear performance accountabilities enshrined in performance agreements and appraisal.

➢ *Insufficient innovation and challenge.* A common complaint in government and the wider public sector is that public servants are poor innovators. Strategy requires new understanding and a preparedness to do things in new ways, challenging received wisdom. Yet government tends to incentivise compliance and conformity in its employees and restrict challenge. Commitment to continuous improvement should be embedded in performance agreements and appraisal.

➢ *Uncertainty about public value.* Outcomes can be identified using sound analysis, but they also need both the mandate of political leaders and their sustained interest. This means that the organisation as a whole must be capable of focusing on a set of goals and returning to them again and again.

EVIDENCE FROM THE FRONT-LINE ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT OF SERVICES

As noted in the previous section, the DTA GovX team's "common pain points" project analyses "how people interact with government as they experience different events in their life, such as looking for work or caring for a loved one". The findings correlate with much of the evidence presented in the last two sections of this report and provide a set of action points for improving the management of the service experience (see Box 3).

APS THOUGHT LEADERS ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE PRODUCTION IN AUSTRALIA

We have interviewed 10 APS thought leaders for this project on how the APS can improve elements of service-delivery to drive higher levels of public trust. The majority of informants argued that a culture shift was required in the way Commonwealth departments and agencies manage and deliver public services to meet the Thodey aspiration of "seamless services and local solutions designed and delivered with states, territories and partners". Although many noted that the process of change was underway. Five specific themes loomed large in discussion:

6. Problem seek – see user feedback as an opportunity for progress. Take all complaints seriously and use simulators to make progress (e.g. ATO simulation lab, co-lab). Consider complaints at executive board level with reporting requirements.
7. Use the APS footprint to facilitate whole of APS collaboration in community engagement.
8. Collaborate whole of government in policy design and delivery through shared accountability mechanisms and budgetary incentives.
9. Practice co-(user) design by default and use behavioural insights to improve our understanding of the needs and aspirations of target groups and develop personalised service offerings.
10. Develop opportunities for dynamic engagement with users through inclusive service design and strategic communication.

Box 3. Barriers and enablers to quality service provision

Delivery barriers	Service reform
Lack of proactive engagement from government with users	Personalisation of public services
Users experience difficulty finding the right information, at the right time, in the right context	Establish a single source of truth across government information
Access to services is hindered by the complexity of government structures	Join-up, collaborate, simplify and ensure "line of sight"
Users are uncertain about government entitlements and obligations	Proactive engagement from government through strategic communication
Public services are not meeting user service delivery expectations	Create service charters and incentivise performance
Users are being required to provide information multiple times	Establish "tell us once" – integrated service systems
Inconsistent and inaccessible content	Adopt user-first design principles
Complexity of tools provided by government	Simplify around user needs

Hence, the evidence from the interviews also points to the need to build collaboration across the APS, enhance service-delivery reform, and ultimately, drive tailored responses that reflect the plurality of identities in Australia.

5. INDICES FOR THE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC SERVICE PRODUCTION

This final section of the review seeks to operationalise the concept of trust in empirical research on public service production. To better understand how trust is lost, consolidated or gained, we need to understand how to measure it. There is an extensive literature that attempts to identify the key indices of trust. The literature tends to focus on three sets of indicators (OECD 2017: 21):

Trust as Competence – the capacity and good judgment to effectively deliver the agreed goods/mandate;

Trust as Values – the underpinning intentions and principles that guide actions and behaviours;

Trust as Satisficing –the degree to which citizens' expectations of a service have been satisfied.

These sets of indicators are considered in more detail below.

TRUST AS COMPETENCE (RESPONSIVENESS AND RELIABILITY)

Competence is not just a component of trust, but a necessary condition (see Forsyth, Adams and Hoy, 2011 in OECD 2017 p.21). Individuals and institutions need to be able to deliver on their agreed intentions in order to be trusted. Competence to deliver is further nuanced by two critical dimensions of trustworthiness[17] – responsiveness and reliability (OECD 2017).

For the delivery of government public services responsiveness brings democratic principles right back into the forefront. Public service responsiveness as a driver of trust recognises the core objective of government and associated public administration – to serve citizens (see: OECD 2017 and the 1999 Public Service Act). Responsiveness is about more than how governments organize themselves to deliver quality public services in a timely manner, it is also about providing authentic opportunities for citizen engagement in the design and delivery of their public services – respecting, engaging and responding to citizens (OECD 2017, see also Stoker et al., 2018a, 2018b).

Reliability refers to the capacity for individuals or institutions to be able to adapt and act appropriately in response to changing circumstances. A reliable government can minimize

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[17] Trust and trustworthiness are two linked but fundamentally distinct concepts (Yang and Anguelov 2013). Trustworthiness is a perception of the characteristics of a trustee (i.e. government institutions), whereas trust concerns a trustor's psychological state, i.e. trust is an individual's perception of the trustworthiness of by another (see Cho and Lee 2011; Yang and Anguelov 2013).

uncertainty by anticipating citizens' needs and responding effectively with appropriate policy and programs, including public services. To be effective in responding, public services must first be reliable.

TRUST AS VALUES (INTEGRITY, TRANSPARENCY AND FAIRNESS)

Perceptions of trust are heavily influenced by values and the guiding motivations they set on future actions and behaviours (OECD 2017). The OECD (2017: 22) presents three values or dimensions of trustworthiness: i) *integrity*, ii) *transparency* and iii) *fairness*.

Research undertaken by Murtin and colleagues (2018) on trust and its determinants demonstrates that citizens' perceptions of government integrity and institutional performance are the strongest determinants of trust in government. Integrity refers to "the application of values, principles and norms in the daily operations of public sector organisations" (Stoker et al 2018b: 19). It is the behaviour of individuals and institutions, and their ethics which determine how they conduct themselves, and in the case of government, how it safeguards the public interest over private interests. Integrity reinforces the credibility and legitimacy of individuals or institutions (OECD, 2017).

In behaving with integrity you behave ethically and adhere to established social norms and governance expectations. Integrity is the cornerstone of good governance (Stoker et al. 2018b), and in Australia, as in many democratic nations, good governance expectations would typically include the dimensions of transparency (transparent decision-making and the inclusion of stakeholder or citizens in the design and delivery of proposed actions such as public services), and fairness (consistency and equity in the distribution of costs and benefits of proposed actions across society).

In considering the full scope of integrity its connection with issues of procedural justice can be observed as an important driver of citizens' perceptions (see Tyler 2001 & 2006). Many scholars have observed that in evaluating government, citizens base their approval not only on the delivery of policy outcomes, but also on ethical judgements of both the actions of political leaders and institutions and the fairness of political processes (see for example: Tyler 2001; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Van Ryzin 2011; & OECD 2017). Similarly, the consistency of service delivery across socio-economic, geographic and cultural boundaries informs perspectives of fairness driving perceptions of trust (Guerrero, 2011; OECD 2017).

The review of trust undertaken by the OECD (2017) found three elements of process and behaviour affecting fairness outcomes: i) *voice*, an authentic opportunity to present interests and be informed on how such interests were considered in decision-making; ii) *polite and respectful treatment*, the capacity to co-operate without the fear of being excluded or exploited (citizen feels safe and valued as a member of society); and iii) *explanations*, the effective communication of information about relevant regulatory and administrative processes and reasons for decisions. While each of these elements need to be considered in the design and delivery of public services and broader policy

reforms, these elements can predominantly be addressed through openness (voice and explanations), integrity (polite and respectful treatment).

Given this focus on ethical behaviours, implementing government integrity approaches can also have negative impacts on trust which needs to be considered. For example, transparency is an important component of government integrity through the provision of openness in government decision-making. Transparency is strongly linked to improved citizens' trust (see for example Stoker et al 2018a, 2018b), with Park and Blenkinsopp (2011) identifying transparency as a predictor of trust and satisfaction. However, the link between transparency and trust is not so simple, with increased transparency potentially reducing levels of trust as controversial policy decisions and outcomes are shared publicly and highlighted by the media and/or political advocates (Margetts 2011; OECD 2017).

The interactions between the two dimensions, competence and values, also needs to be recognised when understanding the drivers of trust in government public services and designing associated policy reforms. A key example of this interaction is the importance of citizens' participation. Participation works to both improve competence through assisting responsive government outcomes in the delivery of services tailored for the citizens needs reducing the gap between expectations and performance (Yang and Holzer 2006; Wang and Wart 2007); and improving integrity by enabling openness in policy and/or service delivery planning through transparency and inclusivity. This (and other potential interactions) highlights the need to consider the drivers of trust as a system rather than discrete dimensions.

This deeper understanding of trust as consisting of two interacting components, competence and values, enables a more informed and nuanced definition of institutional trust, the form of trust that this study is predominantly focused on. Again, following the work of the OECD, for this study of public governance institutional trust is defined as "*A citizen's belief that [the institutions of government] fulfil their mandates with competence and integrity, acting in pursuit of the broader benefit of society*" (2017: 23). Trusting the Australian government to deliver effective public services that benefit all Australian citizens.

TRUST AND USER SATISFACTION

Trust is often seen as an outcome of citizens' expectations of a service and satisfaction with a service (see for example Morgeson 2012; OECD 2017). While often statistically correlated, it is important to recognise that trust and satisfaction are distinct concepts (Fledderus 2015; Wang and Wart 2007). As discussed earlier, trust is the perceived competence and integrity of the government to design and deliver the service fairly to its citizens over time. Satisfaction, on the other hand, relates directly to the outcomes of service delivery in comparison to the citizens pre-conceived expectations (Bouckaert & van de Walle, 2003; Morgeson III 2012; Van Ryzin, 2015) depicted in Figure 1.
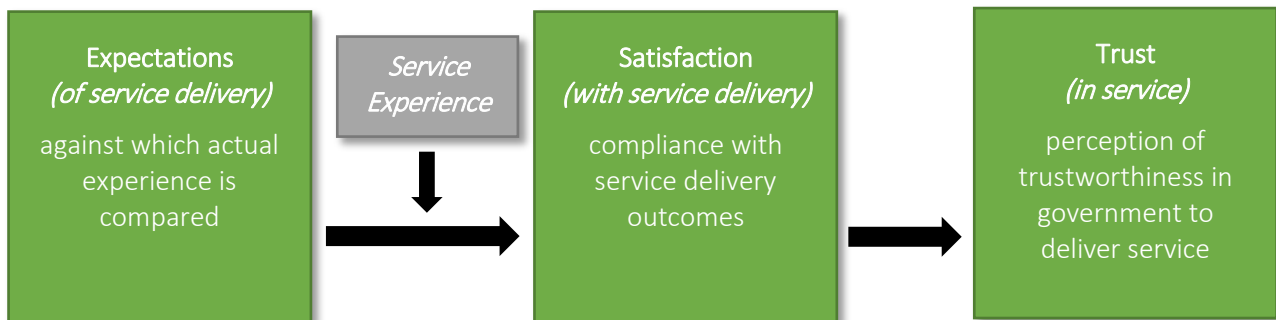
Figure 2. Process of trust development (Adapted from van Ryzin 2007 & Morgeson III 2012)

Many studies have found a strong correlation between satisfaction and trust (e.g. van Ryzin et al., 2004), with the relationship further highlighted by Vigoda-Gadot (2007) who found that satisfaction was the strongest predictor of trust in governance. However, it is important to recognise that there are many context-specific factors which also affect trust, including socio-economic characteristics, historical and political contexts, cultural factors, media etc. (OECD 2017). As such, satisfaction with public services is only one of many drivers of trust and while convenient, the depiction of trust development in Figure 2 is highly simplified and hides the multiple drivers influencing each element within the process as explored further in Section 3.

As observed in this review, there are numerous internal and external factors which can influence trust, captured both within and across the various trust drivers and categorised as demand-side or supply-side factors (see Table 1). Similarly, there are multiple drivers of satisfaction which again are predominantly captured within the various dimensions of trust (see Table 2). This overlap, as shown in Table 2, highlights that there are not in-fact a myriad of drivers affecting trust and satisfaction, but rather a set of core drivers which when implemented properly capture all the necessary pre-requisites for achieving trust – ideally by behaving with integrity and with that, implementing good governance. If a public service is designed and implemented following good governance practices it will:

➢ be a competent and well-managed process that is transparent and consistent in its approach (accountable, reliable);
➢ provide authentic opportunities for citizens voice in development and implementation (responsive);
➢ provide open and transparent information about the service and its governance, including privacy; will ensure adherence to ethical behaviours and intent to ensure equity of service provision for all citizens (values).

Table 2. Drivers and dimensions of trust and satisfaction in public services

26

Trust Drivers		Satisfaction Drivers					
		Professionalism *(Capable and efficient officers, treated with dignity and respect)*	**Information** *(clear and accurate information)*	**Access & Coordination** *(Ease to access consistent and seamless service)*	**Personalised Service** *(Service able to respond to individual needs)*	**Privacy** *(Privacy is maintained and information available on privacy protocols)*	**Effort** *(Level of effort required to engage and access services)*
Competence	**Reliability** *(Predictable, dependable, adaptive, well-managed)*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Responsiveness *(Accessible, timely, respectful, receptive and reactive to feedback)*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Values	**Fairness** *(Equitable, open to citizens voice, polite and respectful treatment, effective explanation of process)*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Openness *(Open to citizens voice and transparent on processes and outcomes)*		✓			✓	✓
	Integrity *(ethical behaviours and good governance mechanisms)*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notably, most of these dimensions are supply-side factors – so what is the role of demand-side factors?

DEMAND-SIDE FACTORS

As noted previously, here we are only interested in indicators that the APS can influence in the context of public service production and can measure. Demand-side factors, are mostly related to the key characteristics of the individual citizen. Let's pause here and think carefully about what we

are trying to 'measure' or 'influence' – trust or trustworthiness? Cho and Lee (2011) spend some time explaining the difference between these discrete but related concepts, describing trustworthiness as being about characteristics of the trustee (supply-side factors) and trust being about the psychological state of the individual trustor (demand-side factors interacting with supply-side factors). That is, trust is an individual's perception of the trustworthiness of another (i.e. individual, government, service etc.) (see Figure 3).

Three core dimensions of trustworthiness have been identified in the literature: ability, benevolence, and integrity.[18] Associated with competence, good intentions, and honesty and consistency, these dimensions of trustworthiness are eerily similar to those of trust e.g. responsiveness and values.[19] We therefore argue that it is more practical to focus on trustworthiness and the supply side factors that make the APS or a public service trustworthy.

Figure 3. The relationship between trust and trustworthiness

Source: adapted from Cho and Lee (2011)

IN CONCLUSION: CONCEPTUALISING TRUST IN THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

In determining the conceptual frame which will guide our qualitative research, we first need to understand the reality of trust in public service practice. Using the work of Rousseau (1989), we understand that as part of the process of public service delivery each of the interacting interpersonal

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[18] See Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman 1995, in Jenssen et al., 2018, 649.
[19] See Yang and Anguelov 2013 and Jenssen et al., 2018.

and organizational relationships are operating within the limits of an individual's 'psychological contract', an inferred subjective contract which sets out "the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement" (Rousseau 1989 in OECD 2017, 16) between two parties (the citizen and the government for example). A lack of compliance with the 'contract' is perceived as a betrayal, resulting in a lack of trust. But trust is multi-dimensional. Using the multiple dimensions of trust, combined with the notion of psychological contracts, we can understand that trust is not binary, it is not simply a case that you have it or you don't. Rather, trust is a series of micro psychological-contracts that cover the various trust drivers and dimensions, and they accumulate to determine what level of trust is granted or not, and under what conditions. Trust is grey, not black and white.

For example, an individual would have a series of subjective and inferred micro-contracts that require a public service to be easily accessible and capable to meet their needs in a timely fashion (trust - responsive), during the delivery of that service they expect their personal information to be treated with privacy (satisfaction – privacy), and be treated as a respected member of society (trust – fairness, satisfaction – professionalism). However, in their experience of the public service sought, despite the fair treatment and privacy of personal information, their needs might not be met in a timely manner. Does this mean they do not trust the public service outright? Or does it mean they trust the public servants to do their very best given the circumstances and will work with them to seek a satisfactory outcome and hence are willing to partially trust the public service on offer? Trust can therefore be considered along a spectrum from fully withheld to fully granted trust (see Figure 4).

Trust fully
withheld

Trust fully
granted
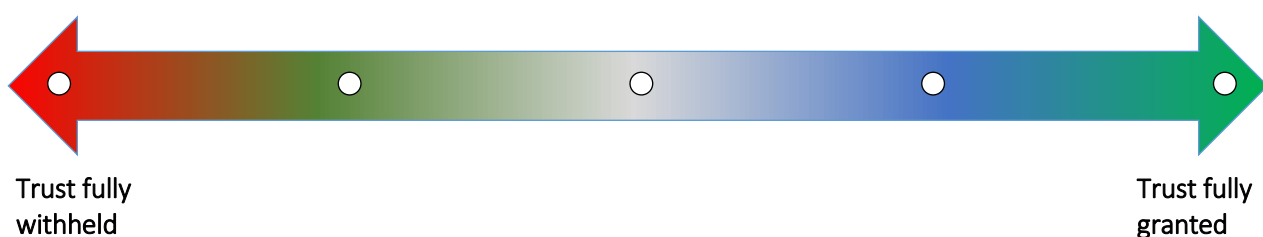
Figure 4. A trust spectrum

Our measures of trust are typically based on direct questions, "Do you trust…?" not "What do you trust about ...?". Rather than forcing a complex multi-dimensional concept into a binary or at best a Likert scale, we should be respecting our citizens capacity for rationale thought and ask them to dissect their trust judgements so as to better understand the logic(s) they use to evaluate trust (issues of cognitive or rational, and affective or emotional forms of trust).

With this understanding we can identify, prioritise and tailor communications and policy and program reform efforts. However, in practice this is not as simple as it sounds. Some researchers

observe that citizens often have a single generalised perception of trust and find it hard to explain their logics when coming to a trust judgement (see Marien and Hooghe, 2011). Hence, in this qualitative study we provide the structure and opportunity for citizens to think past their initial preconceived judgements of trust and describe the rationale behind these judgments.

Acknowledging that trust is a complex and multi-dimensional concept with many of these dimensions overlapping in practice, this project will synthesise and clarify the various drivers and dimensions of trust into a single trust framework (see Figure 5). In this framework we recognise the importance of trust in government, providing a feedback loop between trust in public service production and trust in government. We describe an individual's expectations of a public service not as a block box, but as an array of micro-contracts, each with their own conditions of satisfaction and levels of importance. These micro-contracts might be satisfied, or not, and it is this combination of compliance with the micro-contracts that determines the level of trust granted, if at all. The conceptual frame also deliberately includes the various demand and supply side factors which potentially influence trust outcomes at the expectation and satisfaction stages. It is important here to note the feedback loops from trust in the service and satisfaction with the service to expectations, where positive service delivery and trust outcomes are likely to increase expectations, and poor outcomes likely to decrease expectations.

Figure 5. Framework for understanding perceptions of trust in APS public service

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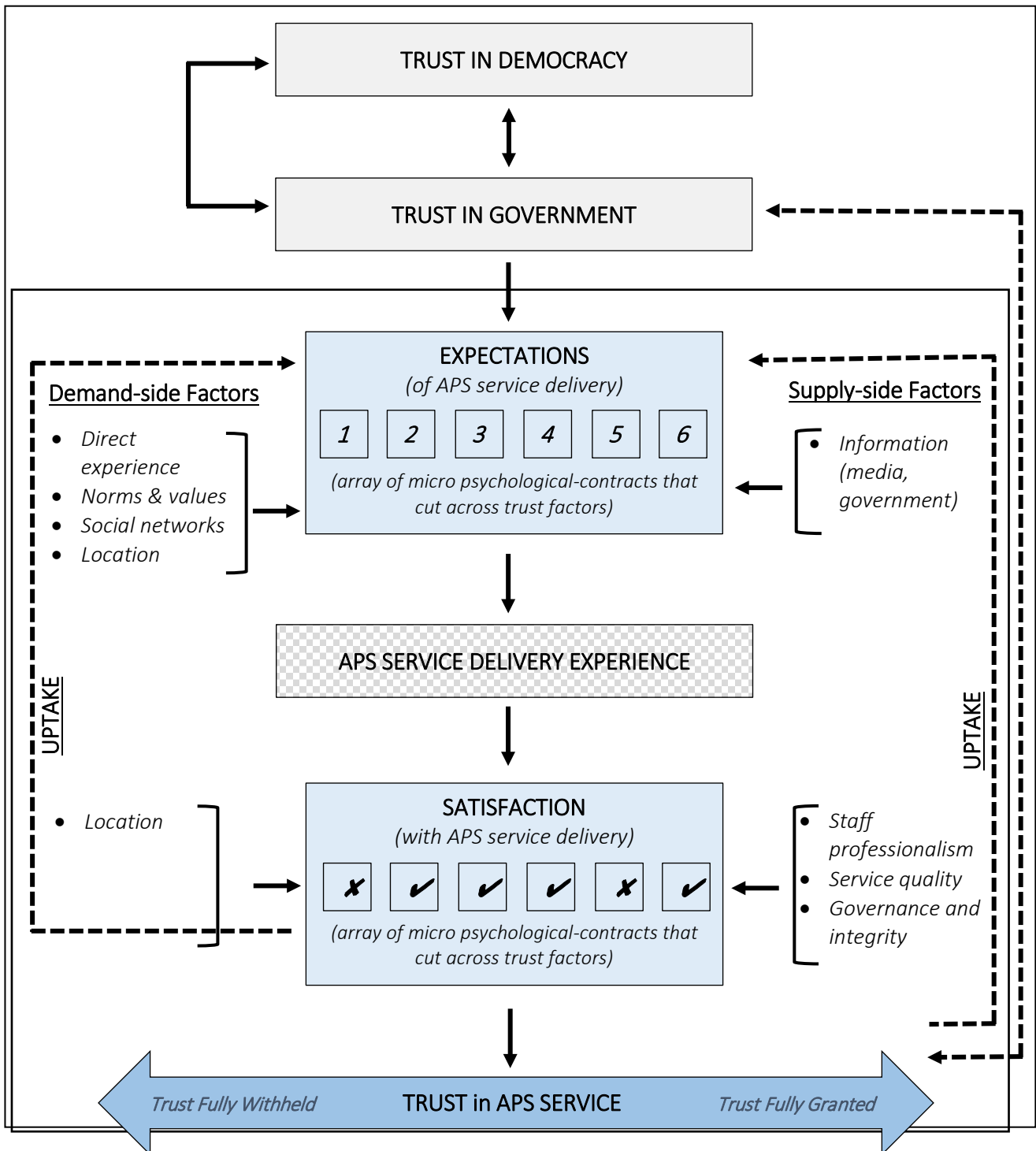Alonso, S., Keane, J. and Merkel, W. (eds), (2011, *The Future of Representative Democracy*, Cambridge: CUP.

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APPENDIX 2 – COMMUNITY SAMPLE

As described in the methods chapter (Chapter 3), while the off-diagonal approach helped in identifying communities for the community sample, it wasn't the only determining factor in selecting communities. A number of other factors were considered, including population size; getting communities from different areas in a State (North/South, East/West), getting communities with a different industry mix, getting a mix of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, etc. The data used to assist the community selection, along with the off and on-diagonal status, is shown in the table provided in this appendix.

	State	NSW	NSW	NSW	NSW	NSW
	Community Number	1	2	3	4	5
	Off Diagonal	OnD + (Trust = 5, DSS = 2)	Neutral (Trust = 3, DSS = 3)	Ond - (Trust 2, DSS = 4)	Ond - (Trust = 2, DSS = 4)	OnD - (Trust = 2, DSS = 5)
	Remoteness classification	Metro	Outer Regional	Outer regional	Outer regional	Inner Regional
	#FGs	2	2	1	1	2
1	Socio-demographic contexts (eg. age, gender, household, employment, education, indigenous %, immigration, levels of disability, etc) (UCL in most cases, broader geography if required)	Median Age 34 (38 Aus) 50.3% Male (49.3% Aus) $1718 Income ($1438 Aus) 52.9% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 0.7% (2.8% Aus) 41.3% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 36 (38 Aus) 49.4% Male (49.3% Aus) $1304 Income ($1438 Aus) 45.7% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 5.0% (2.8% Aus) 68.4% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 38 (38 Aus) 48.1% Male (49.3% Aus) $1090 Income ($1438 Aus) 38.6% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 10.2% (2.8% Aus) 84.8% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 41 (38 Aus) 49.0% Male (49.3% Aus) $982 Income ($1438 Aus) 34.8% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 12.7% (2.8% Aus) 85.7% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 44 (38 Aus) 47.7% Male (49.3% Aus) $1073 Income ($1438 Aus) 35.6% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 5.3% (2.8% Aus) 78.5% born Aus (66.7% national)
2	Population	141000	19000	10000	7000	48000
	Cities, Town, Villages - Regional Australia Institute classification	c: 100,000 to 249,999	f: 10,000 to 19,999	f: 10,000 to 19,999	g: 5,000 to 9,999	e: 20,000 to 49,999
3	**Economic conditions:**					
	• Rainfall Deficiency (as at May 2019)(#2	N	Y	Y	Y	N
	• Economic sector profile (eg. dominant industry and multiple industry communities)	Computing	Poultry Processing	Mining	Secondary Education	Hospitals
	• Boom and bust communities	No	No	No	No	No
	• Transitional communities	No	No	No	No	No
	• Various industry sectors (eg. tourism, dairy)	Hospitals, Banking	Wine, Hospitals	Aged Care/Retail	Retail/Aged Care	Retail/Aged Care
4	**Australian government public service use**					
	• Proportion of Centrelink users (SA2)	19% (29% national)	26.9% (29% national)	32% (29% national)	33% (29% national)	40% (29% national)
	• Service demands (e.g. cancer hot spots, mental health %)	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
	• Mobile service visitations	No	No	No	No	No
5	Level of complaints about Australian government public services	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
6	**Current/recent policy interventions and investment:**					
	• Cashless Debit Card pilot program	No	No	No		No
	• Regional deals,	No	No	No		No
	• CDP areas,	No	No	No		No
7	Political affiliations (eg. voting, swings)	N/A	N/A	Below average swing to LNP	N/A	Above average swing to LNP
8	Levels of disadvantage (e.g. SEIFA and IHAD) (#1)	48 percentile SEIFA 62.3.0% IHAD Q1, 57.9% IHAD Q4	21 percentile SEIFA, 84.2% IHAD Q1, 29.4% IHAD Q4	20 percentile SEIFA 69.0% IHAD Q1, 28.7% IHAD Q4	24 percentile SEIFA 62.4% IHAD Q1, 31.0% IHAD Q4	21 percentile SEIFA 75.0% IHAD Q1, 40.0% IHAD Q4
9	Geographic differences (eg. North/South, East/West, within states where differences common)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	Social capital/social participation	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
11	Digital access (Internet accessed from dwelling)	85.9% (82.5% National)	71.7% (82.5% National)	71% (82.5% National)	67.6% (82.5% National)	80.4% (82.5% National)
12	Service quality	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C

Notes

1 IHAD takes the maximum SA1 value in the SA2 for Q1 and Q4

2 Drought uses the BOM data and includes from Serious Deficiency to Lowest on Record

N/A = Not Applicable

N/C = Not Collected

		VIC	VIC	QLD	QLD
	State	VIC	VIC	QLD	QLD
	Community Number	**22**	**21**	**16**	**17**
	Off Diagonal	OnD - (Trust=1, DSS = 4)	OnD - (Trust = 1, DSS = 5)	Offd - (Trust = 3, DSS = 4)	Offd - (Trust = 4, DSS = 5)
	Remoteness classification	Outer regional	Inner regional	Outer regional	Outer regional
	#FGs	2	2	2	2
1	Socio-demographic contexts (eg. age, gender, household, employment, education, indigenous %, immigration, levels of disability, etc) (UCL in most cases, broader geography if required)	Median Age 39 (38 Aus) 48.1% Male (49.3% Aus) $1022 Income ($1438 Aus) 36.4% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 4.6% (2.8% Aus) 77.4% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 43 (38 Aus) 49.2% Male (49.3% Aus) $801 Income ($1438 Aus) 31.4% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 2.6% (2.8% Aus) 73.6% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 37 (38 Aus) 49.2% Male (49.3% Aus) $1339 Income ($1438 Aus) 40.2% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 8.9% (2.8% Aus) 67.9% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 39 (38 Aus) 48.5% Male (49.3% Aus) $1040 Income ($1438 Aus) 35.4% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 10.9% (2.8% Aus) 83.3% born Aus (66.7% national)
2	Population	33000	14000	145000	8000
	Cities, Town, Villages - Regional Australia Institute classification	e: 20,000 to 49,999	e: 20,000 to 49,999	c: 100,000 to 249,999	g: 5,000 to 9,999
3	**Economic conditions:** • Rainfall Deficiency (as at May 2019)(#2	Y	Y	N	N
	• Economic sector profile (eg. dominant industry and multiple industry communities)	Hospitals	Hospitals	Hospitals	Primary Education
	• Boom and bust communities	No	No	No	No
	• Transitional communities	No	No	No	No
	• Various industry sectors (eg. tourism, dairy)	Services/Education	Services	Accom, Cafes, Tourism, etc	Gold ore mining
4	**Australian government public service use** • Proportion of Centrelink users (SA2)	30% (29% National)	51% (29% national)	29% (29% national)	35% (29% national)
	• Service demands (e.g. cancer hot spots, mental health %)	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
	• Mobile service visitations	No	No	No	No
5	Level of complaints about Australian government public services	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
6	**Current/recent policy interventions and investment:** • Cashless Debit Card pilot program	No	No	No	No
	• Regional deals,	No	No	No	No
	• CDP areas,	No	No	No	No
7	Political affiliations (eg. voting, swings)	Below average against LNP	Below average against LNP	Below average swing to LNP	Above average swing to LNP
8	Levels of disadvantage (e.g. SEIFA and IHAD) (#1)	15 Percentile SEIFA 70% IHAD Q1, 27% IHAD Q4	4 percentile SEIFA, 83% IHAD Q1, 24.9% IHAD Q4	27 percentile SEIFA 68.1% IHAD Q1, 29.9% IHAD Q4	12 percentile SEIFA 57.3% IHAD Q1, 23.3% IHAD Q4
9	Geographic differences (eg. North/South, East/West, within states where differences common)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	Social capital/social participation	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
11	Digital access (Internet accessed from dwelling)	73.7% (82.5% National)	69.3% (82.5% National)	82.4% (82.5% National)	69.4% (82.5% National)
12	Service quality	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C

Notes

1 IHAD takes the maximum SA1 value in the SA2 for Q1 and Q4

2 Drought uses the BOM data and includes from Serious Deficiency to Lowest on Record

N/A = Not Applicable

N/C = Not Collected

	State	WA	WA	SA	SA	SA
	Community Number	**12**	**13**	**9**	**11**	**10**
	Off Diagonal	OffD + (Trust = 1, DSS = 1)	OnD - (Trust = 1, DSS = 2)	OffD + or OnD - (Trust = 1, DSS = 3)	OnD - (Trust = 1, DSS = 5)	OnD - (Trust = 1, DSS = 5)
	Remoteness classification	Inner regional	Remote	Inner regional	Outer Regional	Outer Regional
	#FGs	2	2	4	1	1
1	Socio-demographic contexts (eg. age, gender, household, employment, education, indigenous %, immigration, levels of disability, etc) (UCL in most cases, broader geography if required)	Median Age 35 (38 Aus) 49.3% Male (49.3% Aus) $1313 Income ($1438 Aus) 44.4% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 1.7% (2.8% Aus) 68.2% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 34 (38 Aus) 50.1% Male (49.3% Aus) $1939 Income ($1438 Aus) 42.7% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 21.4% (2.8% Aus) 70.6% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 40 (38 Aus) 49.5% Male (49.3% Aus) $927 Income ($1438 Aus) 34.8% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 5.1% (2.8% Aus) 77.2% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 40 (38 Aus) 49.9% Male (49.3% Aus) $982 Income ($1438 Aus) 37.0% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 4.8% (2.8% Aus) 73.7% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 39 (38 Aus) 50.7% Male (49.3% Aus) $1078 Income ($1438 Aus) 35.9% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 19.2% (2.8% Aus) 83.7% born Aus (66.7% national)
2	Population	4000	14000	17000	22000	13000
	Cities, Town, Villages - Regional Australia Institute classification	g: 5,000 to 9,999	f: 10,000 to 19,999	f: 10,000 to 19,999	e: 20,000 to 49,999	f: 10,000 to 19,999
3	**Economic conditions:** • Rainfall Deficiency (as at May 2019)(#2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	• Economic sector profile (eg. dominant industry and multiple industry communities)	Wine Manufacturing	Accomodation	Meat Processing	Iron and Steel	Correctional Services
	• Boom and bust communities	No	No	No	No	No
	• Transitional communities	No	No	No	No	No
	• Various industry sectors (eg. tourism, dairy)	Accomodation, Services	Education, Hospitals	Fruit, Services	Hospitals, Retail	Hospitals, Retail
4	**Australian government public service use** • Proportion of Centrelink users (SA2)	16.5% (29% national)	21.5% (29% national)	40.1% (29% national)	38.3% (29% national)	37.3% (29% national)
	• Service demands (e.g. cancer hot spots, mental health %)	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
	• Mobile service visitations	Yes (23 July)	No	No	No	No
5	Level of complaints about Australian government public services	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
6	**Current/recent policy interventions and investment:** • Cashless Debit Card pilot program	No	No	No	No	
	• Regional deals,	No	No	No	No	
	• CDP areas,	No	Yes	No	No	
7	Political affiliations (eg. voting, swings)	Below average swing to LNP	Below average swing to LNP	Above Average Towards LNP	Above Average Towards LNP	N/A
8	Levels of disadvantage (e.g. SEIFA and IHAD) (#1)	61 percentile SEIFA, 40% IHAD Q1, 42.9% IHAD Q4	44 percentile SEIFA, 71.4% IHAD Q1, 47.9% IHAD Q4	7 percentile SEIFA, 83.6% IHAD Q1, 25.0% IHAD Q4	7 percentile SEIFA, 78.2% IHAD Q1, 35.5% IHAD Q4	8 percentile SEIFA, 100.0% IHAD Q1, 23.9% IHAD Q4
9	Geographic differences (eg. North/South, East/West, within states where differences common)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	Social capital/social participation	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
11	Digital access (Internet accessed from dwelling)	87.7% (82.5% National)	79.8% (82.5% National)	71.8% (82.5% National)	71.5% (82.5% National)	68.7% (82.5% National)
12	Service quality	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C

Notes

1 IHAD takes the maximum SA1 value in the SA2 for Q1 and Q4

2 Drought uses the BOM data and includes from Serious Deficiency to Lowest on Record

N/A = Not Applicable

N/C = Not Collected

	State	TAS	TAS	TAS	NT	NT
	Community Number	**18**	**19**	**20**	**15**	**14**
	Off Diagonal	Ond - (Trust = 1, DSS = 5)	Ond - (Trust = 1, DSS = 5)	OffD + or On D - (Trust = 1, DSS = 3)	**No Data**	**No Data**
	Remoteness classification	Outer regional	Outer regional	Inner regional	Remote	Outer Regional
	#FGs	1	1	2	4	2
1	**Socio-demographic contexts (eg. age, gender, household, employment, education, indigenous %, immigration, levels of disability, etc) (UCL in most cases, broader geography if required)**	Median Age 41 (38 Aus) 47.8% Male (49.3% Aus) $942 Income ($1438 Aus) 35.9% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 7.2% (2.8% Aus) 85.4% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 43 (38 Aus) 47.0% Male (49.3% Aus) $925 Income ($1438 Aus) 35.2% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 6.6% (2.8% Aus) 84.7% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 40 (38 Aus) 48.5% Male (49.3% Aus) $1234 Income ($1438 Aus) 39.7% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 3.8% (2.8% Aus) 79.8% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 34 (38 Aus) 49.0% Male (49.3% Aus) $1926 Income ($1438 Aus) 44.9% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 18.1% (2.8% Aus) 64.2% born Aus (66.7% national)	Median Age 33 (38 Aus) 52.4% Male (49.3% Aus) $2170 Income ($1438 Aus) 46.1% Couple with children (44.7% Aus) Indigenous 9.0% (2.8% Aus) 61.0% born Aus (66.7% national)
2	**Population**	19000	23000	178000	24000	118000
	Cities, Town, Villages - Regional Australia Institute classification	f: 10,000 to 19,999	e: 20,000 to 49,999	c: 100,000 to 249,999	e: 20,000 to 49,999	c: 100,000 to 249,999
3	**Economic conditions:** • Rainfall Deficiency (as at May 2019)(#2 • Economic sector profile (eg. dominant industry and multiple industry communities) • Boom and bust communities • Transitional communities • Various industry sectors (eg. tourism, dairy)	N Hospitals No No Services, Aged Care	N Aged Care No No Services, Education	N Hospitals No No Government Administration	Y State Government Administration No No Hospitals, Accommodation	N State Government Administration No No Defence, Hospitals
4	**Australian government public service use** • Proportion of Centrelink users (SA2) • Service demands (e.g. cancer hot spots, mental health %) • Mobile service visitations	49% (29% national) N/C No	44% (29% national) N/C No	26.0% (29% national) N/C No	N/A N/C No	13.8% (29% national) N/C No
5	**Level of complaints about Australian government public services**	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
6	**Current/recent policy interventions and investment:** • Cashless Debit Card pilot program • Regional deals, • CDP areas,	No No No		No No No	No No Yes (Part)	No No Yes (Part)
7	Political affiliations (eg. voting, swings)	Above average swing to LNP	N/A	Below average swing against ALP	Below average swing to ALP	Below average swing to ALP
8	**Levels of disadvantage (e.g. SEIFA and IHAD) (#1)**	7 percentile SEIFA, 57.1% IHAD Q1, 16.0% IHAD Q4	8 percentile SEIFA, 81.1% IHAD Q1, 22.2% IHAD Q4	54 percentile SEIFA, 53.1% IHAD Q1, 35.1% IHAD Q4	N/A	81 percentile SEIFA, 56.5% IHAD Q1, 38.1% IHAD Q4
9	**Geographic differences (eg. North/South, East/West, within states where differences common)**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	**Social capital/social participation**	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
11	**Digital access (Internet accessed from dwelling)**	74.1% (82.5% National)	73.3% (82.5% National)	80.4% (82.5% National)	80.3% (82.5% National)	85.0% (82.5% National)
12	**Service quality**	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C

Notes

1 IHAD takes the maximum SA1 value in the SA2 for Q1 and Q4

2 Drought uses the BOM data and includes from Serious Deficiency to Lowest on Record

N/A = Not Applicable

N/C = Not Collected

APPENDIX 3 – OFF-DIAGONAL APPROACH

This appendix provides more information on the off-diagonal approach used in the selection of communities. The off-diagonal method is described in Chapter 3, so this section outlines the limitations of the method, and outlines the statistical method to calculate small area estimates of trust in government services, used for the off-diagonal method.

Limitations of Off-Diagonal Approach

There are some limitations to the off-diagonal method. The main limitation is getting reasonable data from the modelled trust data across Australia, including remote areas. For technical reasons, the modelled trust data we use does not cover remote areas of all States (see Figure 4). This means that we didn't just use the off-diagonal method to select communities – we had to look at other data available from data sources that could provide data for small areas reliably (eg, the Census and administrative data).

The second issue to take into consideration is if there is no off-diagonal area identified in the broad area we need a community for (eg, Eastern Victoria). This is handled by reducing the off-diagonal criteria – so rather than selecting a community in the bottom quintile of trust and/or service provision, using the second lowest quintile. This was done for a number of communities – see, for example, Community 22 in Appendix 2.

Finally, it needs to be understood that this isn't a nice, clean statistical process. Choosing the communities is a messy process that brings together quantitative data from different sources, qualitative data from others on what communities to avoid, and our own knowledge of these communities. The off-diagonal approach is only one input into this complex process.

Modelling trust data

Data on generalised trust from the HILDA survey (using the question "Generally speaking, most people can be trusted" and a response of 1 to 7) has been used by NATSEM in their spatial microsimulation model, and estimates at the suburb level after benchmarking to Census data came up with reasonable results after validation. The first step in this project has been to take the data from the Department's survey (using all observations) and benchmark it to small area estimates of age (years), gender, region, State, country born, whether speaks a language other than English at home, employment status, household situation, household income and highest level of education. All these variables are available on the survey, the 2016 Census, and all are correlated with trust in Government (important for our modelling). A description of the spatial microsimulation process we use is in Tanton et al. (2011).

The modelling has a technical limitation in that it can't calculate estimates for many remote areas. Sometimes, removing a benchmark will mean that the model will work, but the result will be less accurate. At some point, we have removed so many benchmarks that we consider the result unreliable.

In deciding whether an estimate is reliable for an area, we use a criteria which compares the modelled total population with the estimated population. If it is different by more than 50%, we remove a benchmark and

run the model again. For the estimates of trust, we removed up to 2 benchmarks before deciding we couldn't get a reliable estimate for an area.

The modelled estimates of trust in government services have then been validated against the small area estimates of generalised trust already available. We would hope to see a correlation, but also some differences. We also validated by showing the maps at the technical co-design workshop with PM&C and others and asking for feedback on the patterns. This is called a 'sniff' test – do the numbers hold true with reality based on the experience of a group of experts? All these are standard ways of validating results from spatial microsimulation models (Edwards and Tanton 2013).

Figure A3.1 shows the correlation between the generalised small area trust from HILDA; and the small area trust in government services. It can be seen that there is very little relationship between these two estimates, possibly because they are measuring two different things.
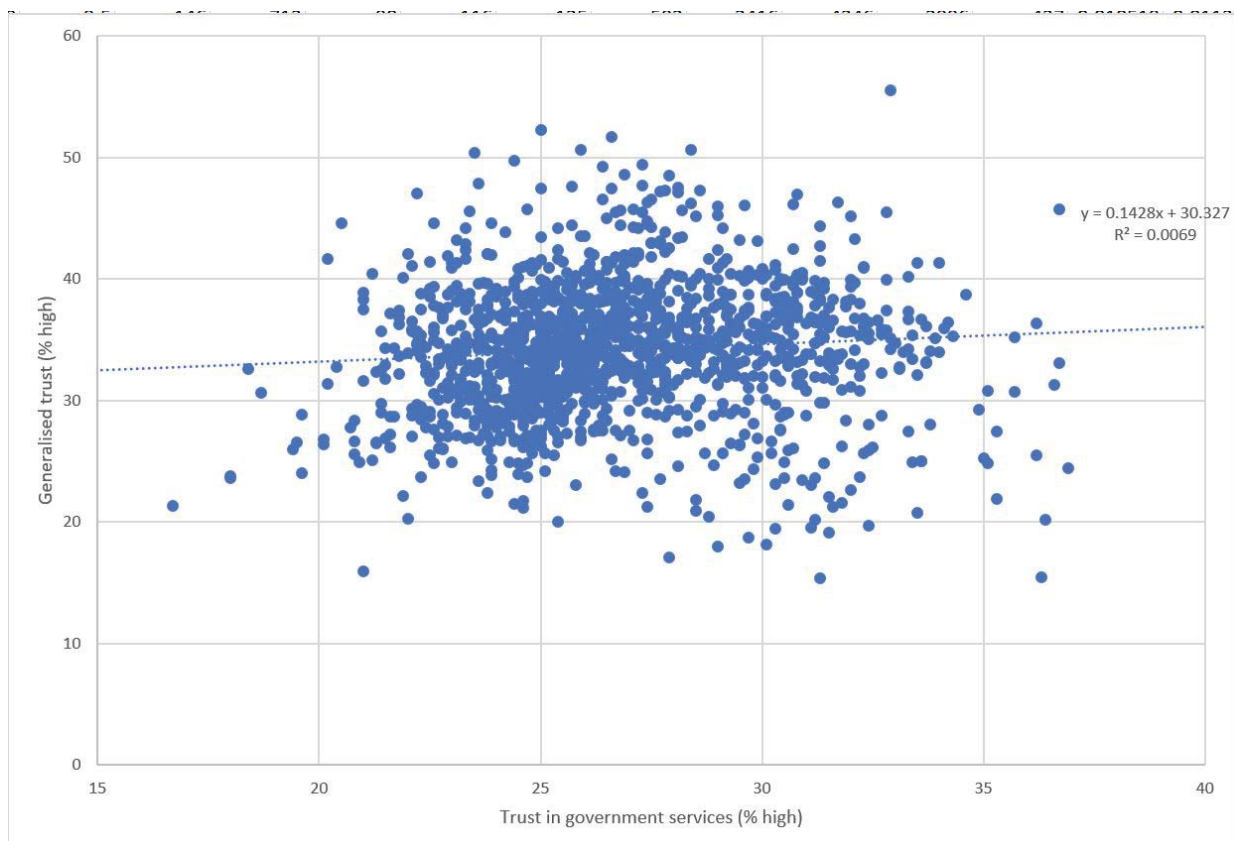

$y = 0.1428x + 30.327$
$R^2 = 0.0069$

Figure A3.1. Validation of generalised trust and trust in government services

Due to the validation (technical validation failed but expert group considered the estimates good), a decision was made to only use the small area estimates of trust in government services to inform our community selection. So the off-diagonal method using these estimates was used as an input into the selection of communities, but was not the only thing considered. The map used for this validation is shown in Figure A3.2.
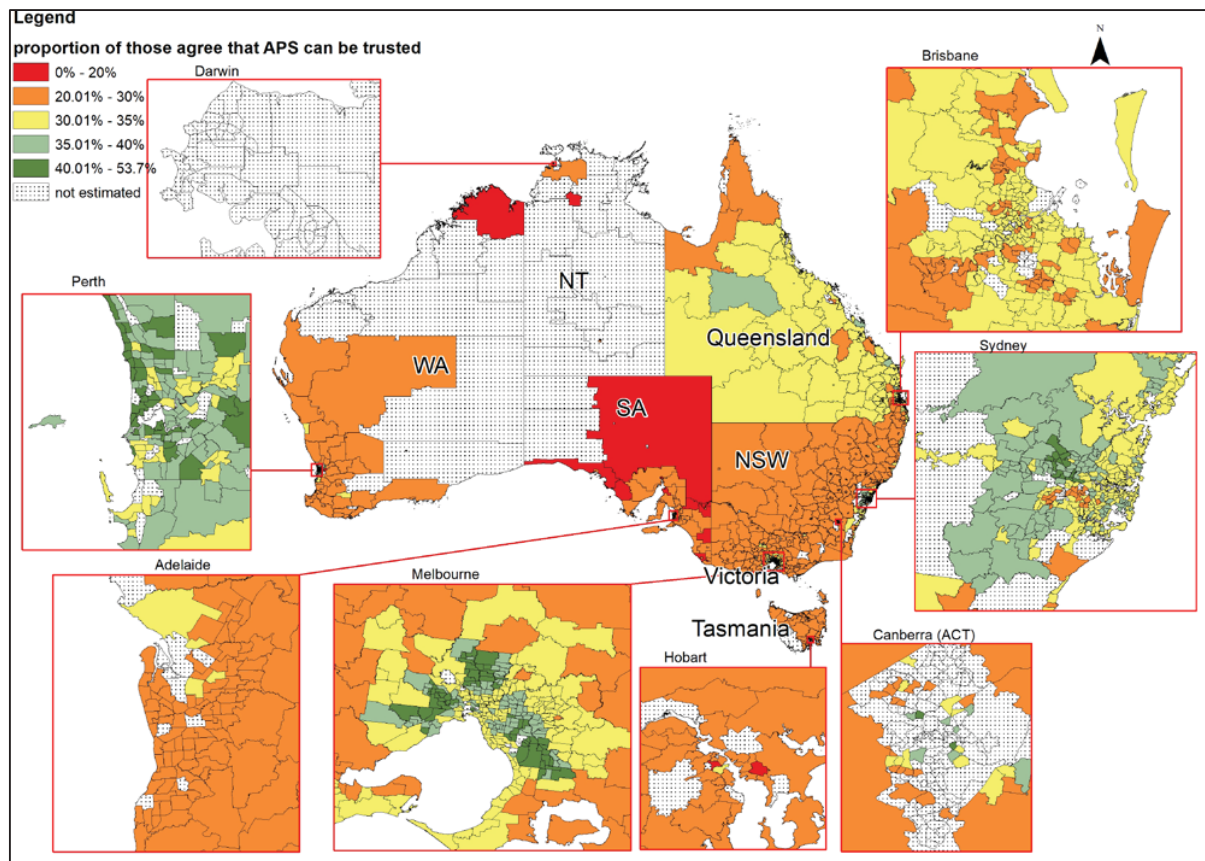
Figure A3.2. Map of modelled trust in Commonwealth Government Services used for validation by technical co-design workshop

Determine availability of services

The method proposed was to develop an index of service availability and use. In the end, this index was created, but wasn't used in the final community selection, where we looked mainly at DSS recipients, but also considered students and hospital bed days separately. This was because the DSS recipients were the only Commonwealth service measure we had – both students and hospital beds were State services.

While the modelled trust and DSS recipients enabled us to map the off-diagonal communities, as explained above, the technical validation meant that we also needed to consider other contextual characteristics as shown in the table in Appendix 2. Where suitable data were available, community profiles were developed and mapped for all SA2's across Australia that helped identify core contextual characteristics for further consideration in the community selection process. The selected study communities:

a) Included a range of socio-demographic contexts (eg. age, unemployment, education, indigenous %, etc)
b) Included a range of populations (eg. small, medium and large communities)
c) Included a range of economic conditions
    i.   Drought and non-drought (or other natural disasters)

     ii.   Economic sector profile (eg. dominant industry and multiple industry communities)

     iii.   Various industry sectors (eg. tourism, dairy)

d) Considered different political affiliations (eg. voting, swings)

e) Considered Australian government public service usage and complaints

f) Considered current/recent policy interventions and investment (eg. Cashless Debit Card pilot program, regional deals, CDP areas, large scale infrastructure investment).

APPENDIX 4 – FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR'S GUIDE AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

MODERATOR'S GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS

No.	Question	Details
n/a	**Moderator introduction**	Thank you for coming here today and agreeing to take part. • ETHICS PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT SIGNED • STRESS THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE PARTICIPATION (TWO-WAY) • EXPLAIN RECORDING/TAKING NOTES • REAFFIRM AGREEMENT TO USE OF DE-IDENTIFIED VERBATIMS IN REPORTING • ASK FOR THEIR INVOLVEMENT, AN OPEN DISCUSSION, NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS, NO EXPERTS • ONE PERSON TO SPEAK AT A TIME • MOBILE PHONES OFF (NOT JUST ON SILENT) • ***TAKE OFF YOUR CYNICAL HAT*** • PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTION (VERY BRIEF)
1	**Right/wrong direction (to establish group sentiment and benchmark for comparison between groups)**	Let's start by thinking about Australia as a whole. In general, do you think Australia is heading it the right direction or the wrong direction? Briefly, what are the signs of that for you? GO AROUND THE GROUP AND DISCUSS
2	**Issues government should be addressing (to identify top of mind national versus local issues and any dominant local issues, as well as whether delivery of government services (and which ones) is a top-of-mind concern)**	What are the main issues that you think the <u>Australian</u> government should be doing something about?. GO AROUND THE GROUP AND DISCUSS
3	**Trust in government (to elicit some of the drivers behind trust in government broadly)**	Thinking about those issues we've just discussed, to what extent do you trust that the Australian government will address those issues? • What makes you think that? • I'd like to explore the issue of trust a bit more. When I say the word "trust" what does that mean to you personally? Write down your description of trust in a few words. DISCUSS.
4	**Trust in government service delivery (to identify citizen touchpoints for trust in government services)**	Let's take that a step further and separate out trust in the Australian government generally and public service delivery from trust in politicians for the purposes of this discussion. Think about the services delivered by the Australian government that are available to you as a citizen. I'm thinking specifically about the services that are on the list in front of you. And I'm not meaning about your level of <u>satisfaction</u> with the delivery of those services, or how good or bad you think they are, I want to understand, if and when you need to use an Australian government service, to what extent you think you can <u>trust</u> that service, considering what

		you've said to me earlier about what trust means to you. So, firstly, I'd like you to rate your overall level of <u>trust</u> in the delivery of Australian government services out of 10 (where 0 is you can't trust those services at all and 10 is that you trust them completely). WRITE IT DOWN. GO AROUND GROUP AND DISCUSS • What overall trust rating did you give ? Why? What stopped you from giving them one point higher/lower? • Do you think your trust in government service delivery has declined over time? What are the signs of that for you? What do you think has happened over time that makes you feel that way? What else? • What level of impact has that decline/increase in your trust had on the extent to which you use government services? If your trust is low, do you still use the service? If you don't, what do you do instead? EXPLORE EXAMPLES OFFERED • Do you think others in your community use government services more or less than you? What gives you that impression? Why do you think that is the case? • Are there any services you would like to use that you don't think are available to you? • Conversely, are there services available that you don't use? Why is that? • How much do you think you can trust the Australian federal government to deliver services compared with government services in other countries? In what ways more? In what ways less? • How much do you think you can trust the Australian federal government to deliver services compared with private sector services in Australia? In what ways more? In what ways less? • Now, I'd like you to look at the list on the page in front of you and give the delivery of each service a rating out of 10, (where 0 is you can't trust it to be delivered at all and 10 is you have complete confidence it will be delivered). If you can't say because you haven't used a service or you don't know much about it, that's okay, just say so. DISCUSS EACH SERVICE: • How did you rate X? What are the signs for you that you can trust that service? What else? Why didn't you give it one point higher/lower? What makes you think you can't trust that service? Why? Why not? GO AROUND THE GROUP AND EXHAUST EACH SERVICE • Are there any Australian Government services missing from that list that are important to you? Please explain that for me.
5	**Barriers to trust in government services 10/70 (to identify key obstacles to trust and possible solutions)**	Overall, what are the most important factors for you that make you feel you can trust delivery of an Australian government service? • Thinking about the government services you trust the most, what is it about them that makes you feel you can

		trust them more than some of the other services you've marked lower? What else?
		• What do you think are the things that are preventing or eroding your trust in Australian government services? WRITE THEM DOWN. GO AROUND GROUP AND EXHAUST
		• What are the issues there? What else?
		• What would need to be done to make you feel you could trust them more? What else?
		• To what extent does where you get your information about a service make a difference to how much you trust that service to be delivered? Are there any sources of information that specifically increase/decrease your level of trust? USE EXAMPLES FROM LIST
6	**Regional trust issues 20/90 (to understand specific views on trust in service delivery in regions and elicit suggestions for improvements)**	Do you feel you have more, less or about the same access to those federal government services than people in other parts of Australia? Why do you feel that way? What are the signs of that for you? How does that make a difference to you and your family?
		• In what ways do you think your geographical location makes it more difficult for you to trust the delivery of these Australian government services? What else?
		• What could be done about that to make you feel you could trust delivery of these Australian government services more? What else?
		• A lot has been said about digital delivery of services in regional Australia. Thinking about your own use of Australian government services, in what ways does or would digital delivery make you feel you could trust these services more? In what ways, less? What are the issues there? What else?
		• What is the delivery 'baseline' for trust in these services for you here in X? That is, what are the basic things you think you need to have for a foundation of trust in these services? GO AROUND GROUP AND EXHAUST
7	**Conclusion**	Just to finish up with, we've talked a lot tonight about trust in the delivery of Australian Government Services; if you had the opportunity to change one thing that would make you feel like you could trust in the delivery of Australian government services more, what would that one thing be? Write it down. GO AROUND GROUP AND EXHAUST
		Any final thoughts on trust in the delivery of Australian government services?
		THANK PAY DISMISS

INDICATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following interview questions are indicative only. Each interview will be different depending on the experience of the interviewee. These questions have been developed following the literature review, initial key informant interviews and early focus group discussions.

1. What is your role at [service provider/community group]?
2. What is your experience with service delivery in regional and remote communities?
3. What services do you believe are most important for citizens in regional and remote communities?
4. From your experiences what are the key challenges for effective service delivery in regional and remote communities?
5. What do you think would help to overcome these challenges and support effective service delivery in regional and remote communities?
6. Recent surveys have shown that regional citizens trust Australian government service delivery less than urban citizens, why do you think this is the case?
7. Given your experience, what would help to improve trust in service delivery agencies in regional and remote communities?
    a. Focus group participants have spoken about the need for improved information that is easy to access and understand. Do you think this would help, why/why not?
    b. Poor quality service from front-line staff (face to face and online) has been raised by focus group participants as a key contributor to reduced trust. How do you think [your service] can improve the client experience?
    c. There are concerns that regional citizens are not using the services available to them. Do you agree with this concern and if so, what could help to improve service uptake in regional Australia?
8. In the interim Thoday report he recommends *"seamless services and local solutions designed and delivered with states, territories and partners"* – what would this look like here in [location]?
9. If you could say one thing to the Australian government about how to improve trust in regional service delivery what would it be and why?
10. Are there any other issues related to federal government service delivery that you would like to discuss as part of this study?

APPENDIX 5 – RECRUITMENT SAMPLE FRAME

Demographic	Attribute	Minimum number in group	Maximum number in group
Gender	Female	4	6
	Male	4	6
	Non-binary	0	0
Age	18-24	2	3
	25-49	4	5
	50-79	4	5
	80+	0	0
Citizenship	Australian	10	10
	Other	0	0
Enrolled to vote in federal elections	Yes	10	10
	No	0	0
Address	Permanent resident at current address for at least two years	8	10
	Permanent resident at current address for 1-2 years	0	2
	Permanent resident at current address <1 year	0	0
Household composition	Dependent children under the age of 18 living at home	4	5
	have children but above 18 or not living at home	4	5
	no children	2	3
Highest level of education completed	University	2	5
	Year 12	2	5
	High school <year 12	2	5
	Primary school	0	0
Employment	Full time (includes family farm)	5	7
	Part time	2	5
	Retired	2	3
	Other (e.g. benefit recipient, student, home duties)	1	1
Occupation	White collar worker	3	5
	Blue collar worker	3	5
	Other (e.g. benefit recipient, retiree, pensioner, student)	3	4

Demographic	Attribute	Minimum number in group	Maximum number in group
Australian Government public service use in the past 12 months	High user (uses 8 or more of the 15 identified services)	3	10
	Medium user (uses 4 to 7 of the 15 identified services)	3	10
	low user (uses less than 4 of the 15 identified services)	3	10
	don't know	1	10
Level of comfort speaking to family and friends about issues that appear in the media	Very comfortable	8	10
	Somewhat comfortable	0	2
	Not comfortable	0	0
	Don't know	0	0
Occupations	Teacher	0	0
	Media, public relations, marketing, market research or advertising	0	0
	Lobbying, politics (held public office or worked in the office of an elected official), or industry association	0	0
	Hospital or public health worker including social worker	0	0
Memberships	Any political party	0	0
	Not for profit group such as Amnesty International, Australian Conservation Foundation, etc	0	0
	Activist group involved in social issues such as Get Up, Advance Australia, Lock the Gate	0	0
	Local community group such as Rotary, Apex or Lions	0	4
Recent focus group or other government research participation	>6 months	7	10
	3-6 months	0	3
	<3 months	0	0
Level of comfort with digital technology	very comfortable	0	5
	somewhat comfortable	0	4
	not comfortable	0	4
	don't know	0	0