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THE ROLE OF SCIENCE IN POLICY

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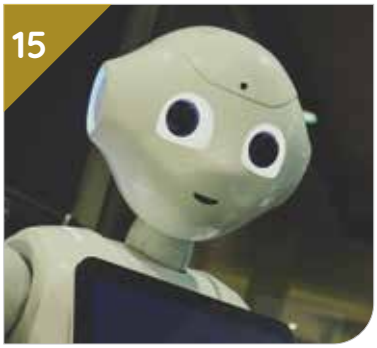

Artificial intelligence and government

New York City's Open Streets programme

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IPANZ President **Liz MacPherson**

The new Public Service Act 2020 received its Royal Assent on 6 August. The new legislation is proudly founded on the bedrock of the State Sector Act 1988 and the original Public Service Act 1912. This foundation has given us our place to stand. We are one of the last (if not the last) truly apolitical, trusted public services in the world.

The Public Service Act 2020 builds on this legacy, this whakapapa. It aims to enable the public service to deliver better outcomes and better services – to create a modern, agile, and adaptive public service. It also affirms the constitutional role of the public service in supporting New Zealand's democratic form of government by clearly establishing the purpose, principles, and values of an apolitical public service, as well as establishing its role in government formation.

These principles and values will be important in the lead-up to the general election. The pre-election period is a testing time for the public service. Why? Because the public service is part of the executive branch of government. For the period that a government is in power, the public service's role is to help that government be the most effective and successful government it can be. This necessitates the development of close, trusted, professional relationships. To be good stewards, the public service must be able to have the same relationships with the next government the people elect.

Making this work is the paradox and the power of an apolitical public service.

The election period is when a government is necessarily at its most political. MMP arrangements can exacerbate this as government partners seek to differentiate themselves pre-election. At the same time, the government must continue to govern. New Zealand does not have a three-month pre-election caretaker convention like Australia. The government is the government until it is not the government. This is precisely when the public service must be at its most apolitical – continuing to serve while exercising fine judgment regarding requests that may or could be perceived to be party political. This year is likely to be even more challenging as COVID-19 may necessitate more decisions, activity, and allocation of funds in the lead-up to the election than is usual. Adhering to the public service principles and values enshrined in the Public Services Act 2020 will be critical to navigating these challenges.

Watch this space: over the next few journals, we will be focusing on facets of the Public Service Act starting with Crown–Māori relations. What does or should it mean to have responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi enshrined in the Public Service Act? Are there effective Crown–Māori models we can learn from?

Contributions Please

***Public Sector* journal is always happy to receive contributions from readers.**

If you're working on an interesting project in the public sector or have something relevant to say about a particular issue, think about sending us a short article on the subject.

Contact the editor Simon Minto at simon.g.minto@gmail.com

Democracy in the Age of Political Scandal

Democracy is in trouble. BRYCE EDWARDS sees the latest run of political turmoil as reflecting problems that go much deeper.

Recent political turbulence indicates that all is not well with New Zealand democracy in the lead-up to the general election. The rise of scandal politics reflects numerous problems and strengths in our political system. Because our democracy is increasingly characterised by scandals, we need to develop more robust ways to deal with them, while also finding ways for our system to address other more ideological and policy-driven concerns.

The extraordinary changes and turbulences in New Zealand politics in 2020 illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of our political system. An effective government has largely dealt well with the serious shock of COVID-19. This is reflected in the significant support for the government. The most recent opinion poll puts support for Labour on 61 percent, with 85 percent believing that Jacinda Ardern is performing well as prime minister.

The efficacy of New Zealand's political system is reinforced by a number of regular international studies highlighting how well we compare with the rest of the world. In January, the Economist Democracy Index gave New Zealand a score of 9.29 out of 10, pronouncing us the fourth most democratic nation on earth. In the same month, the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index gave New Zealand a score of 87 out of 100, ranking the country as the least corrupt country in the world. Numerous other comparative surveys put New Zealand on top.

Yet this year has also seen a number of concerning trends for our democracy. In fact, just in the last few weeks, we have seen our political system in turmoil, with all sorts of problems, including an imploding opposition, questionable MP ethics, and a parliament seemingly plagued by scandal.

Although this year was supposed to be about an election driven by big policy debates, there has been only limited focus on policy and the proposals of the various parties for dealing with the economic recession and our post-COVID country. And while some of the many scandals are highly colourful and engaging, they raise questions about whether their tawdriness will turn the public off politics and politicians and generally reduce voter turnout at the coming election.

Turbulence and scandal in this term of parliament

This parliamentary term has contained a high level of salacious scandals of varying degrees of importance. The most explosive involved MP Jami-Lee Ross, who parted ways with the National Party amid allegations involving relationships and corruption. Some of his allegations have led to the current High Court trial involving him and some National party donors.

Other political finance scandals have continued to raise questions about the corruption-free nature of New Zealand politics. The Labour-aligned mayors of our two biggest cities, Auckland and Christchurch, are currently under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office. That office is also carrying out investigations of the two main parties of government, Labour and New Zealand First.

The Labour-led coalition has had its fair share of scandals, leading to a number of sackings: Meka Whaitiri due to allegations of violence, Clare Curran over opaque meetings, and Health Minister David Clark for his handling of COVID-19 responsibilities. More recently, Immigration Minister Iain Lees-Galloway was dismissed for having an affair with a staff member.

National has been hit by a spectacular set of scandals, especially the downfall of provincial MPs Hamish Walker and Andrew Falloon, who have stepped down in disgrace. Related to these, there has been ongoing instability in the leadership of the National Party, which is onto its fourth leader in this parliamentary term. Simon Bridges was rolled by Todd Muller in May, who then stepped down after mere weeks in the job to be replaced by Judith Collins.

Increasing volatility in politics

Some of the current volatility in politics is due to the external shock of a global pandemic. All over the world, the crisis has changed politics forever – on one level, it has undermined or boosted politicians, depending on their handling of the crisis, but on a higher level, it has led to a rethink of how our societies are structured. The same is occurring here, and some of this is having a flow-on effect for all sorts of areas of parliamentary politics.

However, the volatility experienced over the current parliamentary term is actually a continuation or escalation of trends over recent decades. New Zealand politics has generally become more volatile and scandal orientated, and the 2020 election year isn't the first to have "unprecedented" levels of scandal and colourful change.

THIS YEAR HAS ALSO SEEN A NUMBER OF CONCERNING TRENDS FOR OUR DEMOCRACY.

The elections of 2008, 2014, and 2017 were also heavy with scandals and resignations. The 2008 campaign was beset by New Zealand First's scandal over donations, which contributed to the party failing to make it back into parliament. The 2014 election was highly influenced by the publication of Nicky Hager's book *Dirty Politics* and the intervention of Kim Dotcom. The 2017 election had plenty of turbulence, especially with the ascension of Jacinda Ardern to the Labour leadership and the demise of Green Party co-leader Metiria Turei.

Given this trend, it's apparent that there are other more long-term causes of increased scandal and volatility. More generally, a picture can be painted of politics being at sea, with its traditional moorings cut. Political parties have had their anchors removed, allowing them to drift and sway dangerously. Suddenly everything is in flux, allowing dangerous and liberating changes to occur. Some of these changed settings are discussed below. These are a mix of positive and negative changes, which continue to shape our democracy in important ways.

Reduced participation in politics

The "hollowing out of politics" in western democracies, as detailed by political scientist Peter Mair in his landmark book *Ruling the Void*, can be seen more strongly in New Zealand than perhaps any other country. Participation in political parties and elections has reduced significantly, which is having important consequences for democracy here.

Turnout at general elections has declined significantly. New Zealand used to have some of the highest turnout figures in the world – about 90 percent of eligible voters – but these numbers have been steadily declining, hitting an all-time low of only 69.6 percent at the 2014 election, before recovering to 74 percent in 2017. Generally, about a million eligible voters are choosing not to participate in our most important political institution. And this year, there are concerns that the chaotic and sometimes negative side to politics might reduce turnout further.

NEW ZEALAND POLITICS HAS GENERALLY BECOME MORE VOLATILE AND SCANDAL ORIENTATED.

The other main way of participation in politics – joining a political party – has been in freefall in recent decades for most western countries. New Zealand is regarded as having had the greatest decline in the OECD. Between the 1950s and 1990s, New Zealand party membership as a proportion of the electorate fell from 23.8 percent to only 2.1 percent.

The reduced participation by New Zealanders in political parties has had a profound effect on our politics because these organisations continue to be our central institution for elections and parliamentary operations. So, although parties are still the agencies in which our representatives are chosen and operate, and although they formally structure debate and policy discussions, they don't have an organic relationship with civil society.

Changes in societal-party alignments have furthered these disconnects, making politics more volatile too. Class voting once meant that Labour had the constant support of urban working people and National had the support of farmers and professionals, but these stark differences have eroded considerably. Support for the parties is no longer structured by such strong ties, meaning that flux in both ideology and voter numbers more readily occurs. Therefore, at the 2017 election, a change in leader took Labour from 24 percent in the polls to 37 percent, almost overnight. While in 2020, National started the year mostly ahead of Labour but plummeted quickly, losing nearly half their support according to some polls.

Professionalisation of politics

The hollowing out of political parties has gone hand-in-hand with the increasing professionalisation of the role of politicians. The life of politicians is much less an amateur one guided by a mass membership – it is more akin to a middle class professional with skills in the private sector rather than civil society. Increasingly, the notion of MPs as a "political class", along with senior staffers and bureaucrats, makes sense.

MPs are also increasingly "career politicians". This means that they come into politics generally at a younger age, via associated industries and jobs such as media, local government, public relations, and as parliamentary staffers – a recent study suggested that about a third of the current parliament falls into this category. In this sense, politics is less a public-service vocation and more a long-term career in which the individual is expecting a lucrative salary and becomes adept at politics as a professional skill.

It could be argued this professionalisation makes for more venal, more ambitious, and less idealistic representatives, and this makes MPs more prone to arrogance and the follies of office that lead to scandal.

The professionalisation of politics has made our representatives more middle class. So, although parliament is diversifying in terms of many demographics – it's becoming younger, more female, less white – it is also becoming narrower in terms of socio-economics, with the occupational backgrounds increasingly including managers, business people, and lawyers. Few trade unionists make it into parliament – even from the Labour Party – and certainly few poor people become MPs.

De-ideological changes lead to a greater emphasis on personality and ethics

With the decline of traditional politics, including class voting, mass participation in politics, and the professionalisation of politics, we are seeing political parties and politicians focus less on ideology and policy. This is observed around the world, with an increased focus on leadership rather than manifestos and on ethics and MP competence rather than visions for societal change.

In the absence of policy differentiation, there is a natural tendency for political parties to weaponise and focus on non-ideological differences with their opponents. Parties seek to damage the reputations of their rivals, where possible, by attempting to raise questions about their competence, likeability, or ethical standards.

ABOUT A MILLION ELIGIBLE VOTERS ARE CHOOSING NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL INSTITUTION.

There is obviously a temptation for politicians to want to focus the public's attention on what damaging information or allegations might exist about what goes on outside public life – in their opponent's personal lives, for example, or in their political operations. But this tendency towards exposé has traditionally been kept in check by a number of settings.

The most common analogy used is that of Mutually Assured Destruction. In political terms, this has meant an informal pact or handbrake that has tended to keep sexual impropriety or corruption allegations out of the public arena. As with the nuclear standoff of the cold war, in New Zealand politics, both Labour and National have known the danger of firing a certain type of missile (involving allegations of corruption or sexual impropriety) at their political opponents if it meant the likelihood that a missile would be sent straight back from the other side. Labour and National keep track of the alleged misdeeds of their opponents, but they're normally careful not to push "the nuclear button".

There are other changes in society, however, that are making the nuclear détente situation less tenable. Revolutions in digital technology, media, and society's morals are leading New Zealand towards openness to the airing of controversies. It's much harder to suppress information about the alleged misdeeds of politicians when the #MeToo era expects sexual wrongdoing to be exposed and when social media is democratising the sharing of information.

We need a democracy that can better deal with scandal

Scandal politics isn't going away. What we are now seeing is the "new normal". Therefore, New Zealand democracy is going to have to be able to handle a lot more turbulence and debates about wrongdoing.

This isn't necessarily a bad thing. The exposure of wrongdoing is essentially the ability to apply sunshine as the disinfectant for corruption, abuse, and other ethical transgressions. Largely, it's better that much of what happens behind the scenes in politics is brought into the light.

However, this new political terrain requires greater sophistication and nuance. The media and politicians need to learn to better differentiate between "the public interest" and "what the public is interested in". We all need to learn to debate and distinguish between the different types of scandals and realise that they don't all have a moral equivalence. Some allegations and exposés are more meaningful than others.

The problem, of course, is one of balance and becoming discerning about what scandals are important. Unfortunately, with the weaknesses in our current democracy, it's not clear that our system is able to healthily cope with the type of volatility and dramas that are besetting the system. We need to have politicians exposed, but we also need to have a functioning democracy in which the other big questions are at the forefront of a mass participatory system of politics – and that doesn't appear to be about to happen.

Democracy needs public servants in the debate

We have to be careful not to allow scandal and political turbulence to be immobilising. Too often, such negative politics can reduce participation in politics and public life – it can tarnish the whole pursuit of politics, but it can also lead to fear of bias and conflicts of interest that push people away from being politically engaged.

Part of New Zealand's current problems with navigating and balancing political scandal are caused by a system in which political participation is not active and vibrant. Our politics is already too hollow, and it would be a shame if the current rounds of scandal lead to even more disengagement – and to even more hollowness in our democracy.

DEMOCRACY NEEDS PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS, AND TOO MANY ARE APPARENTLY LYING DORMANT IN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

The democratic process needs bolstering with increased participation – not just in terms of voting, or joining protests and political parties, but especially in terms of greater public debate and discussion. This is where public servants could play a significant role. Democracy needs public intellectuals, and too many are apparently lying dormant in government departments.

In other Westminster democracies, there appears to be a much greater space for public servants to be part of the public sphere. New Zealand public servants need to find ways to contribute without jeopardising their politically neutral status. The political neutrality of public servants is an essential principle and pillar of our democracy. However, there are many public servants with deep knowledge of public administration and with wisdom to offer.

By being a part of the debates on important policy questions, public servants can help bolster democracy. Such increased democratic activity might well be one of the most effective antidotes to the weakened state of politics that we have recently been witnessing.

The Role of Science in Policy

The government's COVID-19 response has shown how crucial science advice is in informing policy decisions. With so much science discussed in the press and social media, trusted science advice is hugely important for all policy.

But who selects and interprets science for the government and how does it inform policy decisions? MARGARET MCLACHLAN finds out.

As Dr George Slim, a consultant with the office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor (PMCSA), points out, there are a huge number of researchers and scientists in New Zealand. They work across government agencies, universities, polytechnics, wānanga, Crown Research Institutes, and independent research organisations.

"Science is a contested process, so having a number of voices is valuable. The challenge lies in feeding the wealth of science and expertise into government decision making at the top," Dr Slim says.

Dr George Slim

Since 2009, this has been a role for the prime minister's Chief Science Advisor – the first advisor being Professor Sir Peter Gluckman, and since 2018, Professor Juliet Gerrard. The central focus of the role is advising the prime minister about how science can inform good decision making. The office also acts as a conduit between the science community and government and aims to make science more accessible to the public.

Dr Slim says, "The office works in a very transparent and open way; ministries are open to advice and people understand the value science can add to decision making. Juliet is not an 'ivory-tower' person, and she's determined to engage with the government and the science community."

In setting the priorities for her term, Professor Gerrard and her office consulted widely with scientists and others working in the science field. Together they brainstormed ideas and established a list of priority topics, which included plastics, cannabis, and sustainable fishing. Then there was COVID-19.

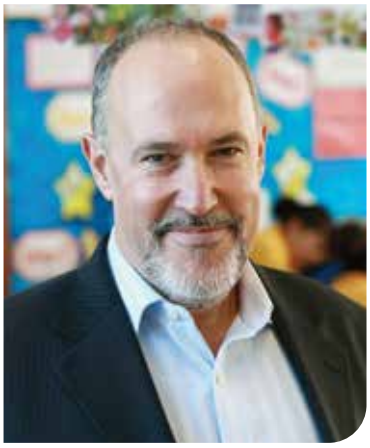
"With COVID-19, we were lucky we had our eye on it as it developed. I remember thinking, 'wow, it looks like only a couple of months before it becomes a serious issue here'," Dr Slim says.

The government based its response on the latest science, which included advice from Professor Gerrard, epidemiologists, and the Ministry of Health. While Ministry of Health Chief Executive Ashley Bloomfield was the public face of the pandemic response, the Chief Health Science Advisor, Professor Ian Town, played a crucial role in interpreting the evolving data on COVID-19.

Role of chief science advisors

Many departments and agencies have a chief science advisor, who works internally to promote science-based decision making, and externally, via the Science Advisor Forum.

Professor Stuart McNaughton is the Chief Education Science Advisor. "I'm often in a privileged position where I can move within groups in the Ministry [of Education]. I find myself helping to connect groups around the evidence base for policy. The Science Advisor Forum is where we have more work to do to join up the agencies. Again, the evidence points to the need for coherent and integrated approaches to social-sector policy – although there are some good examples of inter-agency work, such as working groups on bullying and work on family and domestic violence across the Ministry of Justice, Education, and Social Development."



Professor Stuart McNaughton

Synthesising advice across sometimes disparate evidence bases is part of this integrated approach. A recent example within the Ministry of Education has been collating the evidence about literacy from a variety of sources to address issues from early learning through to senior secondary schooling. Professor McNaughton synthesised the available national data and advised the ministry on where best to focus policy work to resolve some of the issues in literacy education. And it's likely to generate public interest when it's published. "It might be quite contentious," he says.

Professor McNaughton sees science and policy advice as mutually informative.

"You see, scientists don't necessarily understand the policy environment. Policy people have to work quickly sometimes, and it's important to be able to learn about the policy levers and parameters around tailoring science advice under these conditions. It's incumbent on the scientist to realise the degrees of freedom and how the science is just one part of the jigsaw."

However, McNaughton is quick to defend the value of educational research, and he is on a mission to increase the visibility and usefulness of educational science.

"I don't think we've been good advocates in our sector for the critical role of good robust research in education to understand how education contributes to the wellbeing of individuals, whānau, the community, and the nation. For example, there are good estimates of what different levels of qualifications contribute to an individual's life course, as well as the contribution to the

wider economy. It's not that education *can't* add value but there are substantial constraints, such as funding and capability, on the science needed to understand *how* best to add value, including solving the urgent challenges of equitable outcomes."

SCIENTISTS DON'T NECESSARILY UNDERSTAND THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT.

Coming back to the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown, McNaughton has been providing advice on the ongoing impact of learning at home and on "digital divides" for equitable access to education.

In a briefing on the transition back to school following the first COVID-19 lockdown, Professor McNaughton and his colleagues noted: "Many Māori communities have responded to Level 4 with innovation and adaptation. These are strengths to build on. The transition back to school should build on the work of families, whānau, and young children and students during Level 4 to create even stronger learning outcomes and community relationships. Being aware of and capitalising on what home and whānau have contributed, including the cultural expressions of whānau and Pasifika households, will be important."

Professor McNaughton concludes, "There's a lot of work to evaluate and understand what has happened and what we need to do now. And to understand educational phenomena, we need to draw on a number of different disciplines, including psychology, pedagogy, and sociology.

"It's very stimulating, difficult work, but it's an extraordinary opportunity for a scientist such as myself to help to turn the science into useful policy."

From plastics to cannabis

One scientist who is deeply invested in how science can inform policy is Dr Rachel Chiaroni-Clarke who, as a senior researcher and policy analyst with the PMCSA, led the inquiry *Rethinking Plastics in Aotearoa New Zealand.*

Dr Rachel Chiaroni-Clarke

The broad scope of the topic was matched by the breadth of stakeholders involved – people from industry, councils, lobby groups, and in particular, the Ministry for the Environment (MfE).

"I stayed closely connected with key MfE advisors, finding out what they're doing and what information would be useful and sharing our timelines and work.

"We draw the line at being involved with implementation, but we do want to be useful and accessible. Stakeholders are focused on their particular issue; however, we can show the broader scope to help people think about the whole system. With plastics, there's no single bullet but lots of different solutions."

Dr Chiaroni-Clarke says the plastics report, a "mammoth" report, took 10 months to produce. Key policy levers have already begun, such as product stewardship legislation, a proposal to increase the levy for waste to landfill, and consultation on a container return scheme. In addition, business organisations are taking action such as WasteMINZ to standardise recycling across New Zealand.

In July, the PMCSA published information on cannabis ahead of this year's referendum, summarising the social, public health, and revenue issues. It's also looking at the future of fisheries and how science and innovation can help sustainability and feed into policy decisions.

"Our office ensures we're connecting with policy advisors as we're working on an issue. We need to make good connections and ensure that what we're doing is helpful," says Dr Chiaroni-Clarke.

Whose science?

As we learnt with COVID-19, having an understanding of science is integral to our lives. Some of the science communicators during this time have become household names, such as epidemiologist Professor Michael Baker and microbiologist Siouxsie Wiles.

But here we should pause and consider – whose science? In New Zealand, Māori have a large body of mātauranga (knowledge) with its own set of values and practices.

Professor Rangi Matamua won the 2019 Prime Minister's Science Prize for science communication (announced on 30 June 2020). He says 30 years ago, the winter solstice celebration Matariki was unheard of – now thanks to scholarship and communication, it's becoming part of our national identity.

AS WE LEARNT WITH COVID-19, HAVING AN UNDERSTANDING OF SCIENCE IS INTEGRAL TO OUR LIVES.

Professor Rangi Matamua

Professor Matamua thinks the public sector is becoming aware of mātauranga Māori.

"Some good moves have been made by the public sector to incorporate mātauranga Māori within a strategic or goal level. Whether or not it's fully integrated at an operational level is another matter."

He says the benefits of doing so are substantial, for Māori and for all New Zealanders.

"There are some good people in this space doing a lot of work. People understand how good this could be for all of us, reflecting the values and ideals with the knowledge base.

"I'm focused on supporting mātauranga Māori dissemination and inclusion within everyday lives. The hardest group to convince has been the science community. At times, there has been some resistance. It's starting to change, but mainstream science has been suspicious of anything that's new, indigenous, or female.

"I honestly think as a society we're fortunate to have the democracy and leadership that we have. We have a progressive, caring community, led by the public sector. There are many little steps that build on an ever-growing body of work incorporating mātauranga Māori in everyday lives."

THERE ARE MANY LITTLE STEPS THAT BUILD ON AN EVER-GROWING BODY OF WORK INCORPORATING MĀTAURANGA MĀORI IN EVERYDAY LIVES.

One example is the 2019 NCEA Review where Māori respondents expressed their concerns that the NCEA system was not equitable for Māori. The government proposed a package of seven changes, one of which was recognising the parity of mātauranga Māori within NCEA and that it has equal value with other bodies of knowledge. It is committed to working closely with Māori to design what this could look like in practice.

The best solution

It's certainly challenging for policy practitioners who must draw information from multiple sources to come up with solutions to improve the lives of New Zealanders. As the DPMC Policy Project website states: "Policy practitioners need to get better at understanding the lives of the people they are designing policy for; they need to get better at engaging with customers and stakeholders. They need to interpret the available evidence and data. They need to be savvy to the political context and understand what the government wants to achieve. They need to be able to advise on options and recommend the best solution."

That's why policy – and politics – is an art *and* a science.

To find out about:

The Science Advisor Forum, go to https://www.pmcsa.ac.nz/who-we-are/chief-science-advisor-forum/

The impacts of education after study, go to https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary-education/life_after_study

The project on rethinking plastics, go to https://www.pmcsa.ac.nz/topics/rethinking-plastics/

The issues around legalising cannabis, go to https://www.pmcsa.ac.nz/topics/cannabis/

Mātauranga Māori in NCEA, go to http://www.conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/ncea-review/change-package/matauranga-maori/

KEEPING THE PUBLIC'S TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

SHENAGH GLEISNER talks to the Auditor-General, John Ryan, about public accountability, trust, and confidence.

The Auditor-General's website often contains challenging ideas. In late 2019, they wrote about public accountability with a focus on the trust and confidence of New Zealanders in the public service. They also drew attention to the focus on stewardship in the public service legislation and considered how public accountability could change accordingly. Their strategic directions document tells us of their intention to find out how well the public service delivers outcomes for New Zealanders. Later this year, they will publish their second report in their public accountability series, along with one on performance reporting. These are matters of great interest to IPANZ. So we thought it was time to find out more from the Auditor-General.

You have said the accountability system must adapt to changes in public expectations. What are these changes?

Public accountability is about being accountable for what the public decides is important – and what the public expects of the public service is changing fast.

Our work suggests that improved performance is important, but it's not enough any more. The public increasingly expect the public service to include them, understand them, to listen – and respond – to their needs, to act as one public service, and to demonstrate high standards of integrity.

John Ryan

Do you feel our accountability system is adequately focused on the public service's legitimacy to New Zealanders?

Legitimacy to, and buy-in from, New Zealanders is what gives the public service licence to operate. I cannot stress enough how important this is.

Our system has many strengths. The public service has highly capable people, strong institutions, and good checks and balances. But it must be better at connecting with all New Zealanders. While overall trust in the public service is strong, the Kiwis Count Survey still shows larger gaps in trust from Māori, Pasifika, and people with disabilities.

Engaging with the public should be a fundamental part of what the public service does. The public is looking for integrity and fairness in their dealings with the public service. They need to feel their views are really heard and taken into account and that the public service is ultimately working for them.

What are the factors that build trust and confidence in the public service in the eyes of New Zealanders?

Onora O'Neill summed this up nicely in a TED talk I watched. Think about what you need before you trust someone: you want to know they are competent, that you can rely on them, and that they are being honest with you.

Competence, reliability, and honesty. This is the basis of a good relationship. It's the same between the public and the public service. Doubts about honesty and integrity in particular very quickly erode trust and confidence.

ENGAGING WITH THE PUBLIC SHOULD BE A FUNDAMENTAL PART OF WHAT THE PUBLIC SERVICE DOES.

You say that how the public sector tells its performance story is fundamental to maintaining trust and confidence. Do we need to do better?

In my view, much of the information that's reported is not that meaningful to the public. Whether it gives parliament or ministers what they need is an open question, too. What is clear is that it rarely answers the questions New Zealanders really care about – is my neighbourhood safe, is my house vulnerable to flooding, and so on. It is too often entity and service focused, rather than focused on outcomes relevant to people.

The public service has worked hard to be more open and transparent, but this has little value if the reported information is irrelevant, untimely, or unclear.

Do you think trust in the public service has increased over the COVID crisis?

Our COVID-19 response has shown that achieving successful outcomes not only involves an organised and responsive public service but also the action, buy-in, and trust of communities across New Zealand. It has also shown that when times get tough, citizens fundamentally trust the government – but that trust can be easily lost, so the public service can't be complacent.

The longer-term success of this approach depends on maintaining that partnership between government and the public. This means finding different ways of connecting, informing, and reassuring people. The COVID-19 response has thrust key public servants into the spotlight and put a human face on the bureaucracy.

Let's talk about stewardship. You say there would be five measures of agency performance relating to good stewardship: long-term thinking, prevention, integration, collaboration, and involvement. How can you audit these?

I should say that these are not my ideas – they reflect the "five ways of working" from the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. But I do think they are useful.

They are not what we traditionally think of as indicators of performance. They are not about producing things or delivering services, but are about better ways of working.

These are also not things auditors typically focus on – so we will need to find "better ways of working" too.

Whatever measures New Zealand adopts, auditors will need to focus more on the "how" than the "what". For example, how do agencies apply these new ways of working? How do they manage risks? How do they engage with citizens and other public agencies? And how do they improve their behaviours over time?

The Welsh Auditor-General audits how agencies comply with the "five ways of working", which shows that auditing can adapt as the public service evolves.

Perhaps we could focus on prevention. How would you know that an agency was adequately focused on prevention or early intervention?

Preventing problems requires tackling the underlying factors that cause, or contribute to, a problem and working with others to design and implement ways to address them.

We would expect to see clear evidence of long-term thinking. This means agencies invest in developing a good understanding of the problems they face, who is impacted, and the nature and scale of the impact. We would expect agencies to understand what has been tried before and why it worked or didn't work.

We would expect to see evidence of system-wide thinking. This means agencies understanding the problem in a system context – understanding the causes and contributing factors in the context of the different roles and responsibilities of those who support or participate in the system.

We would also expect that interventions are underpinned by strong evidence, well-thought-out plans, robust risk-management strategies, and monitoring and evaluation arrangements that reflect a realistic timeframe to achieve the benefits.

WE WOULD EXPECT TO SEE EVIDENCE OF SYSTEM-WIDE THINKING.

Your strategy puts emphasis on evidence that the public service is achieving outcomes for New Zealanders. How are you going to assess this?

Our focus on outcomes is about understanding the degree to which public agencies are bringing about positive change in New Zealanders' lives.

We have chosen topics that focus on factors that affect the wellbeing of a wide range of New Zealanders.

This will often involve assessing how multiple agencies work towards a common outcome. Our work seeks to understand the outcomes agencies are working to deliver, how those were decided on, who needs to be involved, how they work together, and who is meant to benefit.

We will look at the challenges agencies face and – of course – the results being delivered. We will examine the measures and indicators used to track progress and see how well these relate to the problem being tackled and the needs of those New Zealanders affected.

Outcomes, by nature, are achieved over the long term. The challenges public agencies face are considerable. None of this is easy – for the public service or for us.

You are emphasising domestic and family violence – can you tell me more about how you're going about this?

We have started a multi-year work programme to better understand the systems in place for addressing family and sexual violence and to guide our future work in this area.

Family violence and sexual violence are complex, multi-generational problems. Successive governments have invested a lot, but this has yet to result in significant and sustained reductions in violence.

The joint venture for family and sexual violence is a new way for multiple agencies to work together to tackle a common challenge. We plan to find out if this has been set up well to deliver on its objectives.

You quote Michael Power in *Policy Quarterly* who talks of making audit processes "less remote and disciplinary". Do you agree?

Power was talking about this in 1994, but his thinking is still relevant today. He not only believed that audits need to change to make them less "remote and disciplinary" but also to make them more useful and engaging.

Public sector auditors work with agencies to ensure their findings are understood and recommendations are acted on. They also have relationships with audit and risk committees. The way we're approaching our work on family violence is another example of a more ongoing relationship.

Much of our work, necessarily, looks at what public agencies have done. Recently we have been doing more real-time auditing – sharing insights and recommending improvements as agencies do their work, rather than pointing out later where things went wrong.

We did this with the firearms buy-back scheme and the Provincial Growth Fund. We'll also do the same with the joint venture for family violence.

We are still very careful to protect my office's most important asset – our independence. I liken this to being the referee on the field: independent but still in the game helping people work within the rules, rather than the television match official who sits in judgment from a distance.

I've been saying the public service needs to directly engage with the public to understand their needs, and that applies to my office equally. We're looking at how we engage better so we are less remote, more relevant, and more useful to the public too.

We have been talking about public-sector performance. This is an important part of the audit role. Is there a risk that this discussion could overshadow the fundamentals of the financial audit – ensuring there are strong financial controls and processes to ensure public money is managed well?

Our public service is recognised worldwide as having strong financial disciplines, and my office will continue to provide assurance over whether that is the case.

But that matters little if outcomes are not being delivered for the money invested – if they are not ones that matter to New Zealanders or if performance is not reported in a relevant, timely, and clear way. We need to focus on performance in all its dimensions to maintain the trust and confidence of parliament and the public.

To bring this full circle, the starting point for effective public accountability has to be understanding those you are accountable to and what matters to them.

ESTABLISHING A PUBLIC-SERVICE PROFESSION

Having a regulatory profession in the public service has often been talked about. KEITH MANCH reflects on the story of the Government Regulatory Practice Initiative and how it's moved the public service closer to having a regulatory profession.

As of mid-2020, public-service regulators are part of a profession. This has been brought about by the Government Regulatory Practice Initiative (G-REG), but getting to this point has not been easy. It has required sustained effort over more than a dozen years involving many people from central and local government, the country's industry training organisation, and Victoria University.

So what is a profession?

While G-REG hasn't adopted a specific definition, the Australian Council of Professions provides a useful benchmark description:

> A disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards. This group positions itself as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education, and training at a high level, and is recognised by the public as such. A profession is also prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others.

Three pillars of G-REG

G-REG has three central pillars: people capability, organisational capability, and the development of a professional community of regulatory professionals. Activities to support these pillars include research and teaching programmes led by the Professor in Regulatory Practice at Victoria University, an active programme of developing publications to support the development of regulatory practice including a number of articles published in *Policy Quarterly*, and a framework of qualifications managed by the Skills Organisation. There is also a continuing education programme, an annual conference series involving hundreds of participants in different centres, and a variety of peer-learning activities between agencies and regulatory professionals that support the development and application of knowledge to improve regulatory practice.

Reaching across agencies

This article outlines G-REG's progress as we move into the second half of 2020. It's also intended to provide some insight for central and local government people engaged in other vocations about how they might develop a cohesive approach similar to G-REG, whether that is a profession, a community of practice, or some other endeavour.

Of course the reach of G-REG across all agencies isn't complete, and there will be people employed in regulatory roles who have not yet been engaged in any G-REG activities. Hopefully, this article will assist in changing that.

This article builds on two other articles that appeared in *Policy Quarterly*: "Improving the Implementation of Regulation – Time for a Systemic Approach" and "Watching the Birth of the Regulatory Profession". The G-REG story is also set out in some detail in the *Palgrave Handbook of the Public Servant*, which describes the origins of G-REG, what it does, and its benefits.

Unfolding the G-REG story

In 2008, a number of regulatory practitioners got together and agreed that competency development for regulators wasn't being addressed effectively. While some regulatory agencies had structured training and certification programmes, most didn't. The risks of not having a system-wide approach to training and development include inefficiency, inconsistent standards, and regulatory failure.

This led to a group of senior regulatory representatives and the government's Skills Organisation creating a joined-up approach to improving the competency of frontline staff involved in implementing regulation – which became known as the Compliance Common Capability Programme (CCCP).

Early in its existence, the CCCP recognised the need to focus on the three pillars outlined above. An important early decision was to include central and local government regulators.

G-REG BY THE NUMBERS

34 state sector

39 local government

5 non-government organisations engaged

6,000+ graduates in **5** qualifications

8 current continuing education seminars

4 annual conference series

8 articles in *Policy Quarterly*

5+ peer-learning exercises

2 "Reflections on reviews" articles

For more, check out the G-REG website **www.g-reg.govt.nz**

In the period 2008 to 2011, initial work on the first pillar, people capability, was undertaken by regulators from 18 central and local government agencies, acting as subject-matter experts, supported by a "club funded" approach to resourcing. The work on qualifications was co-ordinated by the Skills Organisation.

During this period, there was recognition that improving the capability of people needed to be supplemented with addressing organisational capability. The result was the development of *Achieving Compliance: A Guide for Compliance Agencies in New Zealand*. Senior regulators in the G-REG community are now working to update this 2011 guide.

THE RISKS OF NOT HAVING A SYSTEM-WIDE APPROACH TO TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT INCLUDE INEFFICIENCY, INCONSISTENT STANDARDS, AND REGULATORY FAILURE.

In the period between 2011 and 2015, the CCCP continued its work with a range of activities related to each of the pillars. This included further development of initial qualifications, promulgation of *Achieving Compliance*, and a range of activities designed to bring regulators together to share information and understanding about good regulatory practice.

Parallel with this, in 2014 the government commissioned the Productivity Commission to undertake its review of regulatory institutions and practices. The CCCP was already considering how to make its future sustainable, so in response to the Productivity Commission inquiry, leaders of the CCCP initiative advocated for the development of a lasting, system-wide commitment to the development of a regulatory profession.

Submissions to the Productivity Commission proposed an arrangement very much in the nature of what is now G-REG. This recognised that on the one hand, the strength of the CCCP was its voluntary basis, which meant that those who engaged in it did so because they explicitly saw the benefits for their agencies, their people, and the system as a whole. But on the other hand, the strength was also understood to be a weakness – it was an arrangement that depended on individuals who were in positions that were relevant to the purpose of the CCCP, but whose tenure and interest was uncertain over the long term.

Ultimately, part of the government's response to the Productivity Commission included the CCCP evolving into G-REG, hosted by a secretariat housed at the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and overseen by a chief executive oversight group and a senior officials steering group. It continued to be club funded, but on a more certain basis.

The three pillars of CCCP lived through the evolution to G-REG and remain at the core of the initiative.

The numbers of people involved in G-REG activities of one kind or another continue to grow, and its future looks assured, judged by the enthusiasm of those involved – if not yet underpinned by a truly sustainable financial model, after the COVID-19 pandemic interfered with efforts to achieve this.

Key success factors

Finally, it's useful to reflect on G-REG's key successes through the lens of a development cycle approach – conceive, design, test, deploy and maintain, and grow.

Conceive	The concept required a conscious decision to trade off quick action at an agency level to "do something" relating to competency development for longer term, system-wide success, using collaborative action.
Design	The design involved agreement to common standards and language regarding regulatory and compliance activity. A key tipping point was collectively accepting that regulatory activities are 80% the same and 20% different – not the other way around.
Test	While not planned that way, the CCCP era turned out to be a test for what was possible and has now been delivered at a higher level in the G-REG era. The shift was made by embracing and making the most of the Productivity Commission inquiry, which could have been viewed as a threat to the CCCP initiative.
Deploy and Maintain	Like the conceive, design, and test phases, G-REG continues to be a "by the community, for the community" effort. It has required, and continues to require, a core of passionate champions alongside a structure, which currently involves an oversight group, secretariat, and subject-matter-expert groups, to design and deliver specific initiatives. It needs to be institutionalised, but with a small "i".
Grow	G-REG is very aware that there is more to do. Expansion of engagement within New Zealand, continued development of creative ways for regulatory practitioners to learn from each other, contribution to regulatory stewardship and policy networks, and international outreach are all on the horizon.

Where to next?

The COVID-19 pandemic has not stopped G-REG in delivering core activities. Most of its qualifications activities are already online, and the use of online platforms for things that would otherwise be done face to face has been successful. However, the ambitions for growth have been slowed. They need to be underpinned by more sustainable and significant funding. Whether or not it becomes possible to achieve this in the future is yet to be seen.

But given that the hallmarks of G-REG activity are passion, perseverance, and creativity, the question isn't about whether it will exploit future opportunities, but how quickly.

EYES ON THE WORLD

Public agencies around the world are dealing with new and difficult problems. PETER MCKENZIE examines two articles that suggest new ways of dealing with challenges like pandemics and climate change.

As it responds to huge problems like climate change and COVID-19, Aotearoa is entering a new era of governance – one marked by larger and more complicated problems that demand new and more innovative solutions. To face these challenges, the public service will have to adapt to new methods of working across categories and hierarchies.

This Eyes on the World will focus on two articles that deal with this challenge. The first, "The Case for Mesh Governance" by Geoff Mulgan at University College London pushes back on the impulse to centralise and examines how different levels of government can co-operate across hierarchies. The second, "Think Tanks: New Organisational Actors in a Changing Swedish Civil Society" by Pelle Åberg, Stefan Einarsson, and Marta Reuter in *Voluntas* gives an insight into how civil society actors external to government can and should be integrated into the policy process.

"The Case for Mesh Governance" – Geoff Mulgan

COVID-19 has put intense pressure on governments around the world. Aside from the tragic loss of life, the pandemic has also acted as a natural experiment in best-practice governance. We can learn from the variety of governmental responses in order to perform better when confronted by similar challenges.

There is, however, controversy about which lessons we should learn. Advocates of centralised government point to our experiences in Aotearoa New Zealand as proof that centralisation ensures efficiency and clarity. Meanwhile, advocates of decentralisation underline how important the semi-autonomy of states and cities has been in the United States, where clear federal co-ordination has been sorely lacking.

Mulgan argues that neither of these impulses is correct. Instead, the most successful responses to COVID-19 have been marked not by an entrenchment of hierarchy but by a willingness to work across it. He calls this "mesh governance", which he defines as "an integration of multiple tiers, acting together, sharing data, lessons and insights." Physical mesh combines vertical and horizontal links in order to make a system (whether in fabric or in a computer-based system) stronger.

He points to a number of examples of mesh governance, such as South Korea's Central Crisis Management Committee (which is composed of representatives from both national ministries and large cities), Australia's Council of Australian Governments (which brings together both national and state governments), and the UK's now-defunct Government Regional Offices (which performed a similar function with different regions and cities).

According to Mulgan, mesh governance has a number of key features:

1. ***Support for relationships and networks*** – the central goal of mesh governance is not merely to establish meetings where different tiers of government are represented, but to foster

genuinely trusting relationships between those different tiers. If individuals and groups from each tier can engage with each other and build informal networks, then it will be easier to co-ordinate formal machinery across hierarchies.

2. ***Co-ordinated vision and problem formation*** – in order to co-ordinate policy responses, it is crucial to first agree on what the problem being confronted is and what is likely to come next. With that shared vision, solution-oriented policy making becomes much smoother.

3. ***Combined problem-solving teams*** – having generated a shared vision, problem-solving teams composed of officials from across the hierarchy can build customised policy responses that draw on expertise from each tier and so are more likely to receive buy-in.

4. ***Integration of other civil society actors*** – mesh governance should engage actors from across civil society. Universities, think tanks, and advocacy organisations will also have invaluable expertise and experience, which they can contribute to ease the policy-creation and implementation process.

5. ***Combined curation of data*** – a difficulty for co-ordinated government responses is that the actors involved are often operating with different sources of information that occasionally point in different ways. Joint curation of data allows a more comprehensive and accurate data picture, which all actors can draw from together.

The merits of such an approach have already been seeded in most governments through the creation of joint task forces (often in a security or emergency context, like COBRA in the United Kingdom or the cross-agency co-operation found in Aotearoa's National Crisis Management Centre). Mulgan argues it is now time for governments to build that co-operation not just across, but down.

Too much collaboration can be deeply damaging to productivity. But at an institutional level, we are still far from that point. Different tiers of government act in ways that are at best additive. Often they are contradictory. According to Mulgan, "With a good mesh structure in place, they can become multiplicative, becoming more than the sum of their parts."

"Think Tanks: New Organisational Actors in a Changing Swedish Civil Society" – Pelle Åberg, Stefan Einarsson, and Marta Reuter

The process of policy creation is constantly evolving to reflect new societal and political trends. The most important evolutions have centred around the actors involved in policy creation; instead of being controlled by one government entity with subject-matter expertise, policy creation is increasingly a competitive space with multiple government entities, charities, and advocacy groups involved.

This trend of diversification in the area of policy creation will and should continue as Aotearoa deals with the problems that now dominate the public agenda. That is especially true for an increasingly important civil society actor: the think tank. These technocratic advocacy groups are more and more common in Aotearoa; among them are the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies, the New Zealand Initiative, the Salvation Army's Social Policy & Parliamentary Unit, and New Zealand Alternative.

It is important that the public service better understand the origin and role of these advocacy groups, so that it can better integrate their expertise and perspective into the policy-creation process. It is here that the work of Åberg, Einarsson, and Reuter is relevant. They surveyed the growing think-tank ecosystem in Sweden's highly mature civil society, which until recently has been dominated by large mass-membership actors. Of the 38 identifiable Swedish think tanks, 29 have been launched since 2000. They operated on the assumption that if the proliferation of think tanks could happen there, "it can happen anywhere".

This proliferation, according to Åberg, Einarsson, and Reuter, is the result of three trends: first, the changing role of popular movements – as political parties and mass-membership organisations (such as the labour movement) have transitioned away from a focus on policy, think tanks have emerged to take their place; second, a shift in public discourse – ideological visions have faded in perceived legitimacy in comparison with the more evidence-based and technocratic approach, which think tanks tend to focus on; third, the evolving nature of political communication – in an environment defined by hourly or daily news cycles, political parties and mass-membership organisations have had to shift resources towards public communication and solicit policy from external actors like think tanks.

OUR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS ARE LARGELY SERVICE ORIENTED AND OFTEN LOCKED OUT OF THE POLICY-CREATION PROCESS.

Åberg, Einarsson, and Reuter hypothesise that two societal factors determine the nature of these rapidly multiplying think tanks: a civil society's liberal and social-democratic nature and the government's pluralist and corporatist structure. Social-democratic regimes allow civil society to be predominantly advocacy oriented, in contrast with more liberal regimes that require civil society to be predominantly service oriented to make up for the shortfall in government welfare and support. Pluralist governments provide access to the policy-creation process for a range of civil society actors without favouring any in particular, whereas corporatist governments closely engage with a select few actors.

Aotearoa's liberal-corporatist regime means that our civil society actors are largely service oriented and often locked out of the policy-creation process – a good example of this is the Salvation Army's Social Policy & Parliamentary Unit. Given the extensive experience in service delivery that these civil society actors hold, their absence from the policy creation process means that the public service misses out on invaluable expertise and perspectives. Recognising this allows the public service to open up its corporatist structure to think tanks and engage with these increasingly important actors.

Conclusion

To address complicated and multi-faceted policy problems, the public service has to shift towards more effective and diverse methods of developing policy. The insights provided above – of shifting towards methods of mesh governance, which bridge governmental hierarchies, and opening up the policy-creation process to new and multiplying civil society actors like think tanks – offer a few answers to that emerging challenge.

IPANZ is always looking for your ideas on great websites, blogs, and articles from any part of the world that we can dig into to bring the insights to our members.

PLEASE GIVE US SUGGESTIONS ON WHERE WE SHOULD BE LOOKING. SEND YOUR IDEAS TO US AT Shenagh@ipanz.org.nz

IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE? ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND GOVERNMENT

Artificial intelligence presents some marvellous opportunities for the public service. SEAN AUDAIN from Wellington City Council gives a summary of some of these along with the unique challenges.

The digital experience

The human experience is increasingly a digital one. This digital reality touches our lives in a myriad of ways, from conscious actions like electronic transactions and streaming entertainment services to the more unconscious ones such as dynamic traffic management or Google searches. This digital experience is reshaping the expectations people have of their public services. Of the many strands that make up this digital reality, few are as hyped, misunderstood, or promising as artificial intelligence (AI). This article gives a very brief description of AI, it explores how it fits with other technologies that will reshape the way government operates, and it identifies what public servants should consider in developing and growing this capability.

The thinking machine

At the core of AI is the idea that people can build and train machines that can apply the autonomy, intelligence, and decision-making processes we use to perform tasks and respond to situations. These machines take the form of algorithms, sets of rules and equations written for a computer and then applied to sets of data. While the common image of AI is a robot, modern robotics is a distinct discipline and the vast majority of AI is operated within computers or devices. As AI has been developed, two major categories have evolved: General AI and Narrow AI.

- ***General AI*** – General AI is the AI of films and the public imagination – it is a synthetic intelligence that is recognisably human. This type of AI sees machines being able to display traits like abstract thinking, learning, reasoning, creativity, morality, emotional intelligence, and dealing with random occurrences. In short, General AI is equivalent to having an artificial consciousness.

- ***Narrow AI*** – Narrow AI is the AI most of us encounter – it is the algorithms that help produce weather reports, that are the computer opponent in our video games, or that count cars and bicycles in our streets. Narrow AI is exceptionally good at doing specific things, using a dataset of a particular type. Narrow AI is excellent at repetitive tasks that would fatigue, bore, or annoy a person trying to do them. Given that Narrow AI is the AI in commercial use today, this article will focus on Narrow AI.

AI OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES TO FREE PUBLIC SERVANTS TO DELIVER BETTER, MORE PERSONAL SERVICES.

To develop these artificial intelligences, people generally use two techniques: machine learning and deep learning. Machine learning is essentially training an algorithm to perform a task, for example, using recordings of breaking glass to teach an audio algorithm to recognise breaking glass in the street so cleaners can be sent out to clear it away. Machine learning comes in a number of variants depending on the nature of the training or the algorithm being used. Deep Learning is more complex. It seeks to mimic the way our neural systems work. Deep Learning takes the linear processes of machine learning and weaves them together to make webs that can support self-learning and basic reasoning.

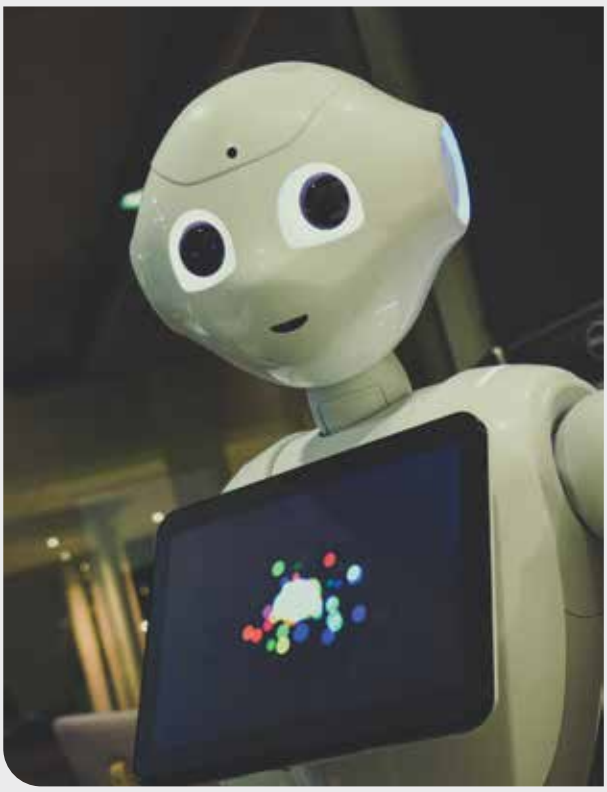
The difference between machine learning and deep learning are important for public servants to understand because they have profoundly different ethical, transparency, and democratic decision-making considerations.

The art of the possible

Government is an increasingly digital art, with almost every task from communication to application assessment, budget construction, and regulatory production having a digital dimension. As a tool, AI offers opportunities to free public servants to deliver better, more personal services and deliver more timely insights. AI has a number of potential advantages:

- ***Automation*** – There are tasks in the public service that are so mechanical, dangerous, remote, or tedious that they are often either not done or not done well. Generally tasks that involve repetition, counting, or limited decision making are suitable for automation. Examples already in use include understanding pest trapping metrics on offshore islands, counting swimming pools from aerial photographs for water-use planning, or counting different types of vehicles in road traffic.

- ***Personalisation*** – The personalisation that has helped make Google and Netflix the service leaders in their industries are also increasingly expected from public services. Chat bots can be used in application processes. This can make government services more accessible to a greater diversity of people and more effectively allow people to use public systems. An example of this is Better Rules, which is operated through Ministry of Business, Innovation and



Employment and allows people to better understand their entitlements.

- ***Accountability*** – Machine learning can sit alongside people to ensure that key performance indicators and expenditure expectations are transparent, targeted, and being met. These auditing algorithms can publish their results to help set up and monitor budgets.

- ***Augmentation*** – Artificial Intelligence is not a binary technology, that is, it's not just about people or machines. It's about achieving outcomes. The augmentation of human capability using AI capitalises on the analytic capability of AI and the judgment, societal intelligence, and understanding of people. This augmentation allows public service managers to task capability away from data gathering towards interpretation and information production.

- ***Awareness*** – We live in a society where admitting we don't know is notable because it's so uncommon. The public often don't understand that search engines like Google know nothing – they find information given by others. AI and the data investment that is necessary to make it work can fuse understandings and make very large datasets intelligible, generating a far better awareness within the many ministries and departments of government.

This is not to say that these potential benefits do not come without costs – just as the application of our intelligence is highly influenced by our personalities and ethics, so too is the potential of AI. Government and technology share many similarities – good government, like good technology, builds humanity into its systems; poor technology, like government at its worst, is mechanistic and inhuman. Government and technology also share an amplification quality – scaling poor decisions as quickly as good ones and amplifying the results.

Making the possible

AI is often touted as a revolution, a phenomenon governments are often resistant to. Government is generally continuous and evolutionary. The question then is how can AI form part of the relationship between the state and its citizens, particularly in its various dimensions such as privacy, freedom, expression, identity, and safety. If we are to build a capability to realise the potential benefits of AI, we must do so in a way that avoids undermining trust, which sits at the heart of government. These are some of the challenges:

- ***Abdication*** – AI is a fundamentally different technology from many others as it allows for unsupervised decision making. The conscious exercise of power is key to our system of government, and the people responsible for using algorithms must not abdicate decision making to a "black box".

- ***Doing to versus doing with*** – Government differs from private industry in its ability to compel and monopolise – customers have a choice of using a service, citizens do not. When setting up AI decision making, it needs to be clear who things are being optimised for. There needs to be measurable cultural values, and systemic errors must be able to be detected and corrected.

- ***Visibility of ethics*** – There is a great deal of literature on the bias of algorithms in decision making, but often this is a case of programming that reveals bias within the existing human systems. In these cases, it is important that government has a means of recognising these biases, preventing their propagation through AI, and improving the human systems the AI will serve.

- ***Transparency*** – AI is an arcane field that is not well understood. The public service must be fair, free, and frank, which requires openness. Companies can develop AI and then protect their intellectual property, but government can't – it must remain transparent. If government is to develop a sustained relationship with industry and benefit from AI, then it needs clear data and procurement processes or it must develop it's own capability.

- ***Training*** – The tasks that are first automated are often those that use junior staff or less-skilled workers. In this respect, AI must be deployed as part of workforce planning if the public service is to reflect the diversity of the country, and it needs succession planning to ensure there are pathways available for advancing people.

Protecting the environment with data

DAVID LARSEN finds out how data can be a powerful tool in the fight for environmental protection.

"It's essentially building a digital image [or digital replica] of our natural environment." Mike Edginton, Chief Information Officer at DOC, is explaining the concept of a digital twin, which lies behind some of the department's ongoing data management work. "My first experience of anything like this was just after Cave Creek in 1995. We needed to put changes in place so that something like that couldn't happen again, and essentially that involved building a data set of all of the assets we had and the condition they were in and how they should be managed."

Edginton found that having a comprehensive data set at his fingertips was empowering in more ways than he had expected. "I was able to tell a really compelling story about the value those assets contributed to recreation and tourism in New Zealand because I'd given myself this bird's-eye view of the system. That started my journey on trying to understand the whole of the environment in which we're working."

Some years later, DOC's biodiversity team asked Edginton to build them a data portal, a system they could offer to regional and local councils as an easy way of sharing information. "The councils hold a lot of local data about biodiversity. And they also make a lot of investment in biodiversity protection and restoration, so it's very useful for them to know what we're doing, and vice versa."

The portal creates a one-stop shop for many different data sets, which can be presented in 3D as a geospatial model. "So you can build a view of where we're operating, where the threats and the pressures are. For example, with our 1080 operations, you can see them draped over the landscape, and not just the operations themselves but also the individual costings, so you can visualise cost per hectare."

The portal will achieve its full potential when all the regional and local councils come onboard for data sharing. "The sharing of data is a really sensitive issue. It's every agency's responsibility to understand their data and the sensitivity of that data, and the confidentiality of it, and the impacts should that data be misused or lost or whatever. So the standards of data security from one agency to another are not necessarily the same, and that's something we're working towards. I want us to be able to monitor the condition of our environment remotely, 24/7."

None of these challenges are unmanageable – but to safely and sustainably build an AI capability, the public service must be digitally conscious of its actions and investments.

POOR TECHNOLOGY, LIKE GOVERNMENT AT ITS WORST, IS MECHANISTIC AND INHUMAN.

Seeds of the future

Government represents a particular challenge for the development of an AI capability because of the sheer number of industries and sectors it is exposed to and the variation in its roles. What holds true is that for intelligence to function, it must be able to learn – in AI's case, this learning takes place through data. Government has been investing in its data estate under the Government Chief Data Steward and through work at LINZ and NZTA on data standards and investment paths. Similar foundational work can be found in the "rules as code" community, with pilot projects in ACC and work on the RMA at Wellington City Council. In July, the government published the Algorithm Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand, a commitment to ensuring New Zealanders have confidence in how government agencies use algorithms. The charter is designed to demonstrate transparency and accountability in the use of data. What makes the creation of a public service AI capability different from those in other sectors is the requirements for disclosure and transparency. In this respect, the new Privacy Act and the insertion of open government into the purpose of the new Public Service Act represent useful anchor points from which to develop.

TO SAFELY AND SUSTAINABLY BUILD AN AI CAPABILITY, THE PUBLIC SERVICE MUST BE DIGITALLY CONSCIOUS OF ITS ACTIONS AND INVESTMENTS.

AI is already assisting the public service to help conservation, improve safety, and create better, more equitable systems. As AI is scaled and developed in the public service, it will be driven and governed by the relationship between citizen and state.

Using data to keep kids studying

Data can tell you why students give up on study. DAVID LARSEN talks to Paora Ammunson of TEC about the power of data analytics.

Paora Ammunson is the head of the Tertiary Education Commission's Ōritetanga Directorate. "Ōritetanga" roughly means "equity"; Ammunson's brief is to achieve a tertiary education system that works equally well for students of all backgrounds. "You can see when you look at the statistics that this isn't a part of New Zealand public policy life that's completely broken," he says, "because over time, Māori and Pasifika graduation rates are going up. It's just that Pākehā graduation is going up at the same rate. The gap has not narrowed." Meanwhile there are challenging systemic inequities for other communities, such as people with disabilities, former refugees, and young people who have grown up in state care.

Paora Ammunson

Ammunson has a simple definition of equity in education: "Every student should receive what they need to be successful, through the intentional design of the system." So how can we tell what all the different students in our system need in order to be successful? The question is much slipperier than it seems, but Ammunson has a two-word answer: "Data analytics". He quickly adds, "Making good use of data is only one capability among the many an institution needs, but it's a pivotal capability."

Ammunson points to several institutions as examples of what can be achieved with sophisticated, data-driven, student-support frameworks: Te Wānanga o Raukawa in Otaki, the Eastern Institute of Technology in Hawke's Bay, Auckland's AUT, Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology, Waikato University, and Wintec in Hamilton. "My team commissioned some research with Wintec last year. Leadership there is deeply motivated to improve Māori graduation rates and find out what the institution can do better. They've analysed about five years of administrative data, looking for achievement patterns, and then they've combined that with large-scale qualitative interview-based data. Marrying the patterns from the two data sets, they've produced a range of composite profiles detailed enough to be predictive of the experience of students from specific backgrounds."

As an example, one of these profiles covers students who are male, Māori, between 25 and 40, from a low socio-economic background, and the first in their family to go into any form of tertiary study. They have no high-level formal qualifications but have NCEA at level 2 or 3. They have dependants and live in an extended whānau. About 1,000 students matching this profile begin the enrolment process at Wintec every year. Maybe 300 of them will still be there at the end of year one. Drilling down into their data, Wintec have found that they lose these students in clusters and at predictable points.

"When you analyse what would make it easier for them to stay in the system, it's things like helping them with computer skills when they're enrolling because they're the first in their family to go to tertiary and there are basic aspects of the system they haven't met before. Something like 30 percent of them fall at that very first hurdle. It wouldn't cost Wintec much to put an extra person at the enrolment desk with the specific task of helping navigate this stuff. It's the price of a staff member, and if you want to treat that purely in revenue terms, they're losing hundreds of students over this one thing alone, and they'd get funded ten thousand dollars for each of them who completed the year. So once you see that this is the problem you've got, it isn't hard to solve. The trick is to understand your data well enough to see it."

Ammunson's team is working with the universities, the New Zealand Institute of Skills & Technology, and with wānanga to help build these capabilities at scale across the tertiary system. "We're at the beginning of that process. But if you can show that an intervention works, it's easier for leadership to justify spending the money, so the money's more likely to be spent. It becomes a virtuous circle. Data analytics leads us to a much more mature conversation about supporting learners' success."

SUPPORTING SOCIETY'S COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Creative New Zealand has been funding artists, arts practitioners, art organisations, and community arts for 25 years. KATHY OMBLER speaks with those well versed in the arts and in the processes of managing our arts funding.

Art has been described as the repository of a society's collective memory, hence the ethos in many countries for public funding of the arts. Creative New Zealand, a crown entity governed by the Arts Council, Toi Aotearoa, promotes and funds public art throughout New Zealand. Art forms range across Ngā toi Māori, to Pacific arts, literature, music, theatre, multidisciplinary arts, interarts, dance, craft, visual arts, and community arts to new forms of technology-based art.

Funding advisor Kereama Te Ua understands the vulnerability of artists. As a leading performer, he was once so concerned that arts would not provide him with a livelihood that he went teaching. Now he supports others looking to make an income from art.

His role at Creative New Zealand is to help people and organisations make funding applications for the Ngā toi Māori and interarts (fusion) art forms.

Going to the "other side"

"A big part of my job is to have the cultural capability to do that, and tikanga will always guide me. The core values that steer my processes are manaakitanga, mahi tahi (working together), aroha tetahi ki tetahi (accept everybody), tuakana teina ("big brother–little brother" learning system), and whakaiti (humility), which is the most important.

Kereama Te Ua

"When I came here, I thought I was crossing to the 'other side', to a government agency, and I wanted to bring a good level of mātauranga with me. Little did I know Creative New Zealand always had a strong tikanga process, but it was not always visible to the people on the ground," he adds.

Kereama also brings a stellar background in performing arts to his role. For 20 years, he has been a leading member of the kapa haka roopu Te Waka Huia, five times national champions. "Kapa haka is what keeps me grounded, connects me to my aunties, continues the art forms of our ancestors, and gives me self-respect."

In 2000, he completed a Bachelor of Performing Māori Arts, then became deeply immersed in film, theatre, and dance, but he didn't have faith there was a career in the arts so moved to education. "I used haka and theatre to teach rangatahi about health, literacy, and numeracy, then taught performing arts at Whitireia for five years.

"I think having all that experience helps me identify with the artists. They might be a dancer, but how does a dancer write an application? Do they dance it? Or a weaver? I can support them to translate their world into a form we can work with.

"I know that when someone tells me about their piece it's not just a piece of art. It's telling a story, a discourse, maybe about a journey or a healing process. It's baring their heart and soul for all to see in an application."

TIKANGA WILL ALWAYS GUIDE ME.

The Te Hā o ngā Toi Māori Arts Strategy, launched by Creative New Zealand in 2019, is strengthening the tikanga process, he says. The strategy's vision states: "Ngā toi Māori will be seen and heard everywhere and highly valued, as part of New Zealand's distinct identity, which is admired globally."

"The strategy came out of a nationwide road show, asking communities how they see themselves as part of the arts, what barriers they face, what is best to serve our people, and what is best for our arts," says Kereama.

He talks of the importance of Te Whare Tapere, the traditional house of entertainment of Māori. "It existed pre-European, before kapa haka, which is quite contemporary, and included performance art, fashion garments, stories, puppetry, taonga puoro (Māori instruments). Our discussions are now continuing with iwi around the country, asking them what's important. Everything, from the traditions of Te Whare Tapere to waka building to visual and music art fusion incorporating sound and pyro-technology, is in our focus."

Different parts of the brain

As well as supporting artists, the role of funding advisor is heavily administrative as Kereama's colleague, Sarah Burge, explains.

"One side of our role is providing advice to artists and organisations of the arts through the application process. The other side, which uses a different part of the brain altogether, is administration, processing applications that come in ahead of them being sent for external assessment, as well as funding agreements and post-project completion reports."

The challenge is switching between those roles, she says. "Interacting with artists and giving advice, then switching to detailed processing and reading can be hard. The silver lining is it's nice to have variety.

Sarah Burge

"The highs are the applications we can support. We always feel so grateful to be able to support a project. To see an idea on paper being brought to life is super-rewarding."

I really think the arts are important for everyone, all New Zealanders, she adds. "They're a way to bring things to life, to bring joy into everyday life. They're a way of therapy and wellness, for both the viewers

and those making the art, and it's rewarding to see that and to help make it happen."

Like Kereama, Sarah brings an arts background to the role, along with customer-service skills. "I studied at Elam School of Fine Arts and did a conjoint degree, a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Art History. Later I worked in Auckland Art Gallery's visitor experience team, building communication and customer-service skills by working front of house, talking and reacting with people about art." Her computer and administration skills were developed when she joined Creative New Zealand in 2017 as Arts Funding Administrator.

TO SEE AN IDEA ON PAPER BROUGHT TO LIFE IS SUPER-REWARDING.

Having that artistic understanding and background helps us to engage at a deeper level, she says. "People get so excited about their project that we have to give them the time to work through the detail. We have to listen and understand their project. Talking it through often helps them resolve any issues with their project."

Being able to meet with anyone and build trust and rapport is essential, she says. "That means whether by email, on the phone, or in person, it's having the ability to provide the same quality of service no matter the delivery mode. It's being able to send a smile down the phone or in an email."

Creative NZ's nerds

Lee Martelli, Senior Advisor Assessment Services, says her team's focus is around details, structure, systems, and analysis, developing effective assessment criteria. "We love numbers. We call ourselves nerds," she laughs. It might all seem far removed from creative art, but focused, efficient standards-based assessments are critical for assessing funding applications.

"Our role is to develop assessment criteria. Broadly speaking, this is done in three parts: the idea, the viability, and the strategic fit to the purpose of the fund. Often we will add extra criteria, for example, where a project needs to be delivered in a COVID-impacted environment."

A major shift two years ago was the move to external assessment. "We used to have a mix of internal and external assessors and have changed that to entirely external. This follows overseas examples and enables far more expertise and diversity."

Supporting the external assessors is a highlight of Lee's work.

"We have immovable deadlines, and we need to deliver systems to support the assessors. We create an environment based on theory rather than common practice, and we are focused back to standards all the time."

Lee Martelli

Lee says a personal development trip to Harvard Business School, where she learnt about the Kaizen approach to assessment processes, has been particularly beneficial. New Zealand company 1000minds' decision-making and conjoint-analysis software has also provided guidance in looking at the key factors of decision making for the development of assessment criteria, she adds.

Collaboration within Creative New Zealand is very strong, says Lee. "Our work is so deadline driven we all muck in towards making it happen. The people in our organisation are super-talented and can talk strategically. And everyone expects really high standards. We talk a lot about improvement; we are very self-reflective.

"Most of us have previously worked in assessment in the education sector. Some of us are artists with a fascination for the mechanics of analysis and processes."

WE TALK A LOT ABOUT IMPROVEMENT.

Lee has been involved in assessment design and moderation for 20 years; this includes designing assessment exemplars for NZQA. She was formerly Director of the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra Connecting programme (the orchestra's education, community, and outreach programme), where she collaborated with market-research companies on evaluation tools and developing impact frameworks.

Creative NZ – responding to COVID-19

Creative New Zealand teams were not only busier than ever during the COVID-19 lockdown, they also transformed their systems to create more efficiency and give faster responses to those in need and made available a $29 million Emergency Response Package that covered loss of income, funding for short-term projects, and short-term relief for investment clients.

In order to be flexible, responsive, and responsible funders, Creative New Zealand suspended all funding programmes that were open, were due to open, or had applications being assessed. Suspending programmes allowed the organisation to concentrate its efforts on its emergency response. Lee Martelli says the Emergency Response Package generated a massive sector response.

"In the seven weeks that our Phase 1 Emergency Response Package was open, we received triple the number of applications we would normally receive in an entire year. In the last week alone, we received more applications than we would in a year. That package was created within two to three weeks, and we started to deliver it as soon as it was ready. We needed to get funding out to the sector in need – and as fast as possible."

To ensure they could respond quickly and effectively, it was all hands on deck. By fine-tuning their processes and redirecting their people, the usual 10-week turnaround between an applicant applying and getting a decision was reduced to a maximum of three weeks. "We had to be agile with decision making and work faster. During lockdown, the same dynamics worked between all teams. I really liked that everyone came onboard together," Lee says.

Lee found that for her team, Assessment Services, delivering systems in this timeframe was helped by engaging the Kaizen approach. Kaizen, a Japanese term meaning change for the better, is a set of activities directed at improving standardised procedures in business operations.

"It means we ask two things: what is really important in the process that we cannot leave out and what is the most streamlined way to do this and still retain quality and integrity in the process?

"It took us two to three weeks to put the process in place. The whole point was getting the funding out – it was continuity funding and continuity is what was needed."

Emerge Aotearoa

A Non-Government Organisation's Journey to Enhance Cultural Competence

The path to biculturalism can be difficult for organisations. BARBARA DISLEY of Emerge Aotearoa talks about her organisation's path.

Emerge Aotearoa was formed in 2015 when Recovery Solutions Group and Richmond Fellowship Trust merged – these were two organisations that worked in mental health, addiction, disability, and housing. Both organisations had been serving a significant number of Māori and Pasifika whānau and knew they could do better. At the time of the merger, a new board was formed. Four of the board members were Māori, one was Samoan, and the remaining four were Pākehā.

The board were committed to making the necessary changes to more effectively meet the needs of communities. This article focuses on how we improved our responsiveness to Māori.

Barbara Disley

What we did

Clarifying our strategic priorities and our values

To create our values, we brought together kaimahi (staff) from across the organisation and engaged in a process facilitated by Whaea Moe Milne, a Māori health expert. Four core values emerged:

- Whakawhanaunga – Connecting with purpose
- Manaaki – Engaging with respect
- Ako – Walking and learning together
- Whakamana – Acting with integrity.

We then established four founding pou:

- Better meeting the needs of Māori Tangata Whaiora
- Better meeting the needs of Pasifika clients
- Commitment to participation of people with lived experience and peer services
- Social housing provisions to people with mental health and addiction issues

These pou were about moving the organisation towards being bicultural – honouring Māori perspectives in all matters, honouring people's need for connectedness and empowerment, walking the talk, and consistently seeking understanding to inform our day-to-day decisions. Finally, our founding pou looked to honour and value the contribution that comes with lived experience and ensure everyone has the right to safe, warm, dry housing.

Three years on, we refreshed our strategy and the outcomes we aspire to.

Our outcomes are driven and evaluated through a strong social equity lens. We seek to have everybody leave our services healthier and with more control over their lives. Our challenge is to analyse data so that we can look through different lenses to ensure greater equity.

Our priorities, pou, and values form the kaupapa that drives the organisation.

Investing in the pou

We set up an internal structure that ensures Māori capability is present at all levels of the organisation. The current structure supports a Mana Whakahaere at the group executive level with cultural partners at the regional level. The board have held the chief executive accountable for ensuring we grow Māori capability and responsiveness.

Measuring and reporting on success

Reports are presented through the lens of the pou. We try to present as much data as we can through these lenses. For example, we look at recruitment and retention data through an ethnicity lens and for the whānau we support. We are still developing our data capability so that we can more accurately measure outcomes.

Building cultural competence across the organisation

In February 2016, the Leadership Team completed the first Māori Competency

Framework hui at Te Puea Marae, Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland).

As of June 2019, over 650 staff had completed the Takarangi Competency Framework (TCF). This framework was endorsed and partially funded by Mātua Rāki (the Addiction Workforce Development Centre). TCF consists of 14 Māori competencies that can be used in mental health and addiction services. Participants begin by attending a two-day noho marae, then they develop their own portfolios of achievement across the competencies.

Where the TCF portfolios are an individual record, the Poutama is a service-level approach. Each service does a Poutama self-assessment, which is used as the baseline of how they practise the first five Māori competencies. A plan is then developed to move the service to the next level of competency.

Across the group, all staff have learnt, or are in the process of learning, their pepeha and all are encouraged to learn waiata and understand the processes around pōwhiri and poroporoaki. These are incorporated into daily processes, along with karakia, mihi whakatau, manaaki, and the use of whakataukī.

Developing Māori leaders

Te Ngākau Hīhīko o te Kākā Tarahae (Māori Leadership Programme)

Fifteen kaimahi from around Aotearoa were involved in this 12-month Māori leadership programme. In June 2019, the first cohort of Māori leadership participants attended the pōwhiri at Te Puea Marae. The programme is a combination of external and internal experiences. Indigenous Growth provided the initial leadership course followed by internal leadership programmes, including mentoring and coaching. The group recently graduated from the programme, and feedback from participants indicated that for all participants, this experience has been life-changing.

Collaborating and partnering

Since 2016, Emerge Aotearoa has explored opportunities to work with Māori organisations, hapū, iwi, and marae. The board have a memorandum of understanding with Mahitahi Trust, a kaupapa organisation in Manukau, and have worked with Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga to set up housing support services in Hawke's Bay. Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei have been part of the governance board to support Emerge Aotearoa to set up a youth-focused addiction service in Tāmaki.

Taking an equity focus

During the recent COVID-19 lockdown, it became clear that we needed to set up a different process to support Māori kaimahi. As an organisation, we had developed a fund to support staff and whānau who were experiencing hardship. Māori kaimahi were not accessing the fund in the proportions expected so we set up a process with more flexibility and found that the targeted fund was more accessible. We also set up a support network where Māori staff were contacted and supported by other Māori staff.

What has changed?

Greater cultural competency and awareness

Over five years, I have observed shifts in cultural awareness at all levels. People have incorporated pōwhiri and poroporoaki into welcoming staff, clients, and whānau. People report feeling more confident to participate on marae and are much more aware that we all bring different strengths. Staff say they feel they can bring more of their whole self to work.

Embedding values

Staff know and understand our organisational values and are far more likely to refer to them in te reo than in English. People see the importance of our values and try to apply them in their day-to-day work.

Staff engagement

Our last survey showed that our Asian, Māori, and Pasifika populations are slightly more engaged (5 percent higher) than other ethnic groups.

Valued partnerships

As an organisation, we are clearer about our role as a partner. We have benefited from partnerships with iwi providers, and we have been able to offer some tangible benefits in return. One example is the setting up of our youth addiction service in Tāmaki called EaseUp. This service is funded by the Emerge Aotearoa Trust, and we have worked closely with Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei, who have supported us with governance representation and cultural advice.

Outcomes for whaiora and clients

It is always challenging to measure the change. While we are unable to be definitive as to exactly what might work best across all contexts, we are beginning to interrogate our outcomes.

We annually survey people who access our services. Last year's survey was completed by 530 people (23 percent of clients). The return rate for Māori was nearly 29 percent and 14 percent for Pacific Peoples.

The vast majority (92.5 percent) of Māori clients agreed or strongly agreed that staff understood the ways of their culture or community.

We collect data using a self-rating wellbeing matrix. The following data has been collected from clients over 18 months. It comes from 255 clients who had two assessments on a matrix that covers 12 wellbeing indicators.

Māori clients rated their health and wellbeing higher across all indicators than they did at the start of their contact.

Graph 1 on the next page compares the start scores of Māori clients with all other clients. It shows a similar pattern at the beginning of contact with our services. This is compared with Graph 3 where Māori clients at the point of re-assessment consistently rated themselves higher than non-Māori clients.

What we have learnt

It starts at the top

Commitment to cultural competency starts at the top. In our case, that was with the board and then with the Group Executive Team. We always knew we needed to do better by Māori whaiora, who are most disadvantaged within our health and housing systems.

You cannot underestimate the role of strategy and values

We engaged staff in the development of our strategy and values, and they have become strong drivers of change. People know what the pou are, and they talk about and understand the values that drive us.

Change needs to be resourced

Applying resources is essential to ensure you have the leadership, capability, and training to support all staff and processes. Resourcing needs to go into visible positions, as well as to staff training and development.

Measure the change you want to see

Provide reports to decision makers that reflect the outcomes you are seeking.

Make outcomes explicit, for example, the outcomes being achieved by ethnicity makes it clear who is getting what services and how well they are doing as a result of them. Likewise, measuring and reporting on the number of people in leadership roles or the engagement scores of staff by ethnicity can be powerful. That said, we do not always find this easy to do and it can be quite resource intensive.

Don't let up

There can be no let up once you have charted a course. It is disheartening to see how quickly things drift backwards if the attention, time, or resources are not available to maintain momentum.

Last words

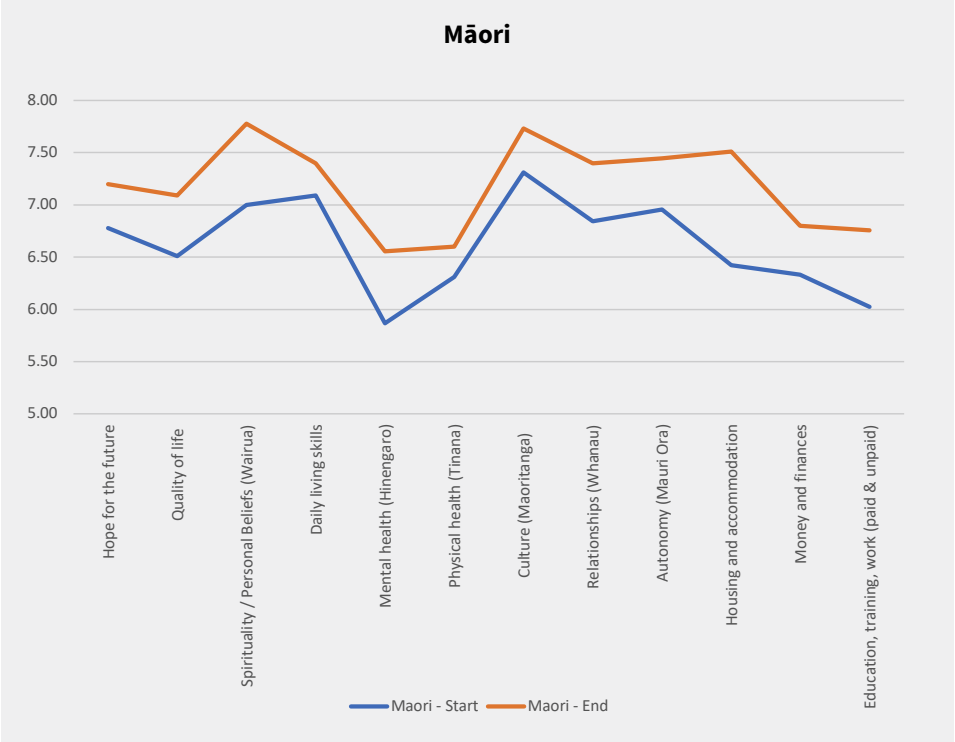
While we have a long way to go to be culturally competent in all parts of the organisation, we are proud of the changes at Emerge Aotearoa. We have moved from people questioning the importance of cultural competency training and the place of noho marae to staff embracing this as a core learning opportunity and experience. Like all organisations, we experience staff turnover, so keeping pace with training and skills is challenging. At times, some people question the need for a cultural lens and the importance of doing things in a different way. However, to be committed to our kaupapa, the messages must be consistent and told and re-told. We often struggle as a mainstream organisation to make and maintain local connections with iwi and hapū. We have learnt that you have to be relevant to your partners and not only receive but give back. Relationships are built on trust and doing what you commit to, and this takes time.

We have created an environment where people are more comfortable to engage in te reo Māori. We also know from experience that if a service creates good outcomes for Māori, it will do this for everyone. We are heartened by how far we have come in five years, and we are excited and challenged by the organisation we will be five years from now.

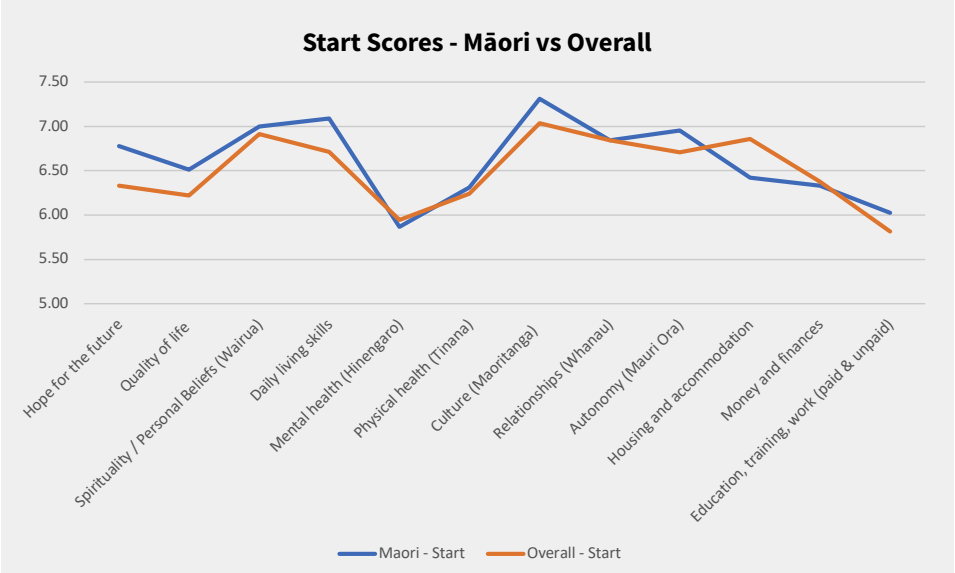
"Kua tawhiti kē to haerenga mai, kia kore e haere tonu. He nui rawa o mahi, kia kore e mahi tonu."

"You have come too far not to go further; you have done too much not to do more."

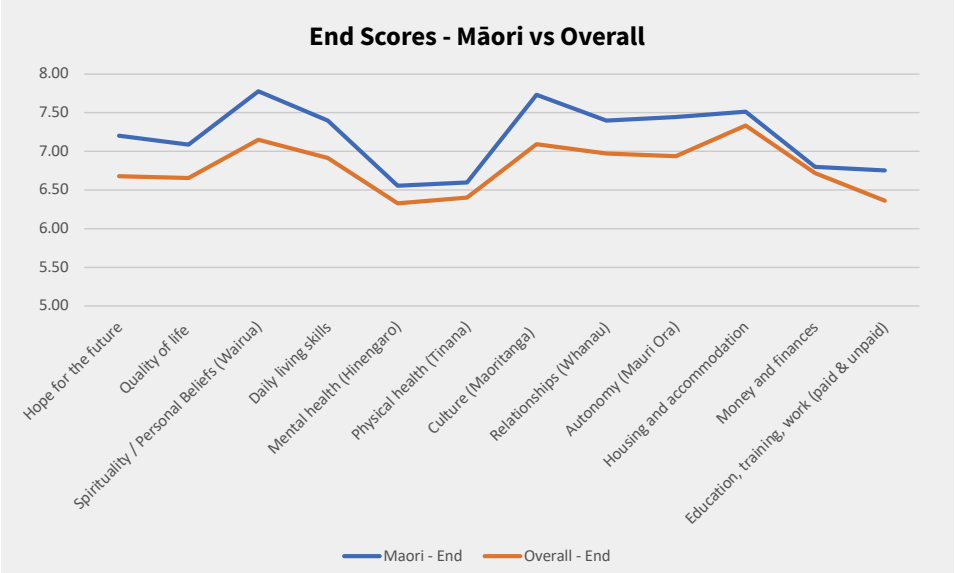
Ta Himi Henare
Sir James Henare
Ngati Hine



Graph 1: Māori wellbeing assessment scores at the start and end of the time period.



Graph 2: Māori client versus all other clients (overall) scores at the beginning of service contact.



Graph 3: Māori client versus all other clients (overall) scores at the re-assessment point after service contact.

New York City's Open Streets programme is closed to many who need it the most

Artist, writer, and urban planner AMY HOWDEN-CHAPMAN, a New Zealander living in New York, reports on the city's programme to find open space during the COVID-19 pandemic. Amy is co-founder of TheDistancePlan.org, an arts and climate platform.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 1 million New Yorkers could not access a park within 10 minutes' walk from their homes. Like millions of other New Yorkers, I live in an apartment with no garden or balcony. To stay sane and get through the stress and sadness of the pandemic, I needed to be able to spend time outdoors – to see the sky.

In March, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that he would close some streets to cars and allow them to be "open" to residents so people could use their street like they would a front yard. However, the initial Open Streets pilot programme consisted of just four streets (1.6 miles) to serve a city of over 8 million residents. The pilot programme lasted just over a week. People were not using the space, and the lack of success was not just because of scale or convenience. While fear and uncertainty about contracting COVID-19 was palpable (the sounds of ambulances dominated day and night), the city's parks were nevertheless packed. Advocates pointed out that it wasn't just crowding or fear of COVID that prevented people using the pop-up open spaces, it was also the heavy police presence.

For decades, there has been a strained relationship between the NYPD and many ordinary New Yorkers, especially those from communities of colour. During the pandemic, the notoriously racist "stop and frisk" dynamics seemed to be playing out once more in the uneven enforcement of social distancing. Of 40 people arrested for social-distancing violations in Brooklyn, 35 were black, four were Hispanic, and only one was white.

In May, the city rolled out a new and more extensive 100-mile version of the Open Streets programme. This time, except for the NYPD's role in installing the Open Streets, officers would not be present. Prior to COVID, street fairs or similar events always required the presence of NYPD officers. Now, although precipitated by a crisis, New Yorkers have greater control over their own street space. However, citizens were quick to point out that a majority of Open Streets were located in the city's wealthier, whiter neighbourhoods.

As the pandemic rages on, so does public debate over what it would take for people of colour to be safe. After the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, tens of thousands of New Yorkers took to the streets to demand racial justice. For many, the blue police barricades that closed off an Open Street became a different type of symbol, one of control and repression. As protestors chanted "Black Lives Matter", they also chanted "Whose streets? Our Streets."

Despite recent efforts to increase equity where Open Streets are set up, the racial gap still remains. There are also inequities around how Open Streets are maintained. One New Yorker cycled to all the Open Streets in Brooklyn and concluded that the programme was "structurally racist", noting not only that there were more Open Streets set up in predominantly white neighbourhoods but that 70 percent of streets in white neighbourhoods were installed properly compared with just 12 percent in predominantly non-white neighbourhoods.

Is the NYPD failing to install Open Streets in neighbourhoods of colour? If so, then this inaction is likely to be compounded by the lack of capacity for neighbours to install Open Streets themselves. People of colour are more likely to have worked as essential workers through the crisis, they are more likely to have lost loved ones from the virus, and they are more likely to have fallen sick. It is now the dog days of summer in New York City, and the threats posed by the COVID-19 crisis are being exacerbated by the climate crisis. As severe heat alerts are issued weekly, the ability to spend time outside in the shade is not just a mental health necessity – it can be life saving. Every person should be able to access a local Open Street and to be free from discrimination and harassment when they do so.

Image: Amy Howden-Chapman

The benefits of ambition

New York–based New Zealander JULIE FRY, co-author of* Ambition: What New Zealanders think and why it matters, *says New Zealand's response to COVID-19 shows how ambitious Kiwis really are.

Gilbert Brim, a social psychologist who spent much of his life researching ambition, concluded that what people are ambitious about changes over time, as they, and their circumstances, change.

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated deeply confronting changes in people's circumstances. People are sick. People are dying. People have closed businesses, lost work and income, had to juggle work and caring responsibilities, and missed spending time with loved ones.

Julie Fry

The response of New Zealanders to these life-changing events should emphatically put to rest the notion that we are not particularly ambitious.

An obvious example is the New Zealand government's ambitious goal of eliminating the virus. New Zealanders took decisive action to keep everyone safe. Leveraging our national culture of humility, generosity, and collective responsibility, the "team of five million" worked together to meet a target that many commentators initially mocked as ridiculously unachievable.

The government also moved rapidly to mitigate economic risks, through increasing benefits and providing wage subsidies. With initial signs of a sharp recovery in economic activity, New Zealand's collective response seems to be working. But, with the virus still running rampant in other parts of the world, and no guarantee of a vaccine, there is scope for further ambitious public-sector responses.

The funding set aside to respond to this crisis could be used to address more than just the urgent and immediate concerns. Level 4 lockdown highlighted the need for access to technology and connectivity for all kids. Some prisons and rest homes exposed staff and residents to unacceptable levels of risk. Closing the border provides an opportunity to reset migration policy so that it prioritises the wellbeing of both locals and migrants – including those people on short-term visas who are effectively stranded in New Zealand. Policies that would once have been politically untenable may now be more feasible given the change in circumstances created by the pandemic.

COVID-19 has been challenging for New Zealand businesses. Unfortunately, some will not survive this crisis. But along with calls for a quick return to the good old days, there are also ambitious businesses that view "these uncertain times" as providing permission to innovate.

During high-level lockdown, working from home and interacting with colleagues, business partners, and customers via video conferencing became the norm for many, rather than something possible with special permission. Businesses changed delivery models, quickly building an online presence and introducing options such as click and collect. GPs and hospitals moved swiftly to provide telephone and online consultations.

Even as lockdown levels change, border closures will continue to influence the way New Zealanders do business. Some education providers switched to online teaching as physical flows of international students dried up. Recognising that high-volume, low-value international tourism will not be viable for some time, ambitious lower-carbon alternatives such as internal tourism and high-value international tourism with user-pays quarantine are now on the table. The end of ready access to migrant labour has led some employers to seek local employees (witness the GoDairy campaign). The ability to adapt to changing circumstances will be directly correlated with future success.

Around the world, COVID-19 has also changed the focus of ambition at a personal level. The extent of this depends on where you happen to be. As I write this in New York, the state has reported 448,140 cases of COVID-19, and at least 32,815 people have died. Mask wearing, physical distancing, and minimising time spent in enclosed spaces with people outside our bubble are still essential. For every New Yorker with the headspace to dream big or try something new, there are many more finding the extent of their ambition is limited to ensuring day-to-day survival. This is the reality for some New Zealanders too – particularly people who are out of work or struggling to keep businesses afloat – but through successful management of the virus, the scale of the impact is significantly lower.

In spite of the recent outbreaks New Zealand still looks like a lucky country (although we got here more through good management and shared sacrifice than good luck). Our robust initial response to COVID-19 has provided more than health and economic benefits – it has preserved the opportunity to live a relatively normal life, with the freedom to pursue a wide range of ambitions.

Situations beyond our border show how quickly this can change, so this is no time for complacency. As with most great ambitions, success requires ongoing effort. No matter what happens next, ambitious Kiwis will continue to adapt and innovate, not just to survive, but to thrive.

WE WELCOME OUR READERS' OPINIONS.

If you have an opinion about this or other issues, contact Shenagh.

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Why data empowerment matters

IPANZ New Professional SAM YOON of Deloitte advocates a different approach to data protection.

Sam Yoon

With the ascension of technology, privacy policy makers are scrambling to balance the utility of such technologies with individual data rights. Appropriate policies should focus on empowering users with their data, rather than punitive measures to limit data usage. Social media has brought the world closer, yet in 2018, 17 million Facebook users had their personal data harvested without consent for political advertising. In mid-2017, a breach in one of the largest credit bureaux in the world exposed the sensitive financial data of 150 million customers. Of course, public institutions are also using personal data to better protect their citizens, but Edward Snowden has taught us to question the boundaries between proactive intelligence versus mass surveillance. And similarly, national crises such as the Christchurch mosque attack or COVID-19 allow us to question where the public good lies in data harvesting. Whether it's data breaches, political manipulation, or mass surveillance, we need effective policies to protect our wellbeing and security but we also need policies that protect the notion of being a "free" person in a democratic society.

One way to view these problems is through the lens of inequality – where one side of the system is more dominant than the other. As with all inequalities, there are two ways to correct the imbalance. On one hand, you can try to reduce the power of data users. Examples of such solutions include giving more teeth to privacy agencies, increasing penalties for negligent data practices, or opposing the use of personal data for public reasons for the fear of misuse. The other type of solution (one that seems to be more rare) is to increase the power of individuals. Recent European regulatory developments point in this direction with multiple clauses bolstering the power of individuals.

From an implementation point of view, it's easier to increase fines and controls in the short term. However, in the long term, I argue that empowering individuals is a more efficient way of dealing with the problem. Imposing costs for data users creates a dead weight loss in the system. Data is not a finite resource, so as long as individuals are appropriately compensated for their data, it benefits everyone if companies use that data as much as possible. For example, think of a songwriter who holds the copyright to a certain tune – as long as the songwriter is fairly compensated and their song is used within agreed boundaries, no one loses from that song being used an infinite number of times. Contrast this with a finite resource like fossil fuels – even with appropriate compensation, you don't want companies to use up all the fossil fuels in the world. As policy makers look to balance data inequality, they should look to introduce more interventions that empower individuals through education about data use and reduce barriers so they can control the way their data is used.

LOCKDOWN LESSONS - THREE CHEERS FOR THE STATE

Playwright and columnist DAVE ARMSTRONG gets excited about what COVID-19 might mean for the future of the public sector.

One of the biggest political debates in New Zealand over the past 120 years has been the size and power of the state. Up until the early 1930s, the economic power of the state was limited and welfare and health spending were minimal. The state could enlist men to fight world wars and seize land for its own purposes, but the state did not play a big part in the economy or the lives of ordinary people.

The state leading the world

The crisis of the Great Depression changed all that. New Zealanders demanded an expanded state. Social welfare was greatly increased in the late 1930s and through the Second World War – by the 1950s, the state extended into many more aspects of people's lives.

But though some wartime regulations were draconian (try being a conscientious objector), many were necessary and humane. By the end of the war, an economic boom saw us leading the world in many social indicators including child health. If the state is such a bureaucratic behemoth that hinders innovation and business, then why have some of our greatest successes as a nation occurred when the state has been large, powerful, and well-funded?

The politics of the 1950s to the 1970s was dominated by men who had lived through the Great Depression and served in the Second World War. Their top priority was security – personal and international. Never again did they want to live through the deprivations they suffered or have their children fight in the terrible wars that they endured.

When former Second World War corporal Rob Muldoon extended the arm of the state into how we drove (carless days), what we bought (price controls, import controls), and what we earned (wage controls), the people said enough. They agreed that Muldoon ran the country "like a Polish shipyard", as David Lange famously quipped. Muldoon's state – whether it was the Red Squad beating up anti-Springbok Tour protestors or the government subsidising forestry and railways in small towns – had become a dirty word.

Deregulation and the pandemic

In 1984, the people voted in a deregulating Labour government – although the people probably got far more deregulation than they voted for. Yet as much as politicians today criticise "Rogernomics" and its failure to create real long-term wealth for most New Zealanders, the size and power of the state hasn't changed that much since 1984.

All this makes our recent COVID-19 lockdown response remarkable. If our government had taken a laissez-faire "market" approach, it might have recommended that people wear masks and practise social distancing, but whether they did or not would be up to the individual. If cases then increased, it would be up to mayors or regional councils to implement stricter rules, but only in their areas.

THE POLITICS OF THE 1950s TO THE 1970s WAS DOMINATED BY MEN WHO HAD LIVED THROUGH THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND SERVED IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

This is exactly the national approach in the United States, where deaths hit 155,000 in early August. In New Zealand, the state acted quickly, broadly, and effectively. When cases started to increase, it listened to public health experts and scientists and brought in draconian rules.

New Zealanders, as they (mostly) did when conscription came in during the First World War and when rationing was introduced during the Second World War, did not complain. In fact, I suspect that many Kiwis wished that the rules imposed during lockdown had been harsher and had lasted longer.

Celebrity public servants

So, what happens when the state exercises its considerable powers to fight a pandemic in a country where, in recent times, the state has been small and meek? The question most New Zealanders have asked during the various lockdowns is "Do the ends justify the means?" and the answer is a resounding yes.

The government took expert advice and agreed that, in a sense, the lockdowns are a denial of our rights, but a necessary one.

The daily television briefings were also necessary, but extraordinary. How often does a public sector CEO address the nation on a daily basis? Ask most Kiwis to name the head of a government department and most would say Ashley Bloomfield and a few might mention Peter Hughes, but that's about it.

The television exposure also led to a Kardashian-type frenzy among some New Zealanders towards Ashley Bloomfield. For those of us who remember the negative publicity top public servants received during the 2001 Christine Rankin case or the more recent State Services Commission's Inquiry into the Use of External Security Consultants by Government Agencies, we were amazed to see T-shirts worn, love odes composed, and flowers sent to the CEO of the Ministry of Health.

But such adulation has a negative side. If things go wrong, and though it may not necessarily be the fault of the person at the top, the "tall poppy" that the media have nurtured can be brutally chopped down.

When former Health Minister David Clark admitted that the Health Ministry had made some mistakes over border controls, even though he had been effusive in his praise for Ashley Bloomfield, many in the media saw the already unpopular mountain-biking minister throwing their hero under the bus. Public pressure grew, and Clark resigned.

Embracing state actions

There is no doubt that the government, by appearing apolitical during the pandemic, has gained enormous political support, but what of the reputation of our government departments?

> THE LOCKDOWNS ARE A DENIAL OF OUR RIGHTS, BUT A NECESSARY ONE.

I have heard anecdotal evidence that some in the public service were apprehensive about the lockdown regulations – they thought Kiwis would never tolerate such strict rules. But radical action, based on high-quality evidence from scientists and doctors, won the day.

The lockdowns have proved that if politicians and public servants make a strong case for the state taking radical, far-reaching action, the people will not necessarily be resistant, especially if they can see the benefits. After the success of the first lockdown in eliminating community transmission of COVID-19, I heard many suggest that the public may be equally receptive to the state attempting to combat climate change, eliminate rheumatic fever, or even eradicate child poverty.

During the first lockdown, when the skies cleared of smog; when people rediscovered the joys of home cooking, board games, and binge-watching TV; and when dogs became exhausted from long daily walks from multiple family members, many people claimed that the new behaviours would exist long after lockdown ended.

Many workers in the public and private sector chose to work from home and, lo and behold, the sky did not fall in. Many cynical employers who believed working from home would be a disaster of distraction found that workers were not just as productive, but in many cases were more productive.

Liberating the workplace

Once we mastered Zoom, shorter online meetings replaced tedious "live" meetings. "The meetings are shorter, and people are far more focused on the topic," one local body politician told me, "and they don't drift in and out as much as they do at our normal meetings." Another politician said, "I never realised how many people rolled their eyes when I spoke."

Yet once the first lockdown ended, roads become clogged again and rush hours reappeared. Had we learned anything? Many workplaces, including some in the public sector, are allowing employees to work at home a lot more. "We work one day a week at home no questions asked," said one junior public servant. "And if you've got a special project to finish, you can ask to work on it at home as well. It's great."

According to a colleague who works in the Wellington CBD, Mondays and Fridays are much quieter now as many people work at home on those days. The other advantage of people working at home is that there are fewer commuters and our overcrowded public transport system has room to breathe.

But not everyone is delighted with the new work habits. I recently talked to the head of an NGO who surveyed his staff soon after lockdown. "Exactly half of them hated lockdown, found working at home entirely distracting, and wanted to return to work fulltime as soon as possible. The other half loved working from home and wanted to continue to do so with minimal office contact."

With fewer people coming into work each day, organisations can cut costs and reduce their amount of office space and equipment. But can there be negatives? The good thing about an office environment is that you can get together and work as a group. There would be few workplaces that don't benefit from having the workforce on-site, without distractions, working as one. But do you need that environment 40 hours a week? Many workers talk about an ideal situation being working from home, with perhaps twice-weekly meetings at work to catch up with colleagues and discuss any issues.

> LOCKDOWN DIDN'T CREATE THE BIG CHANGE THAT SOME PEOPLE PREDICTED.

Another feature of the trend of working from home is that many businesses in the Wellington and Auckland CBDs, already paying high pre-COVID-19 rents, are struggling as they have fewer customers. Some local body politicians have even called on the government to make it compulsory for state sector workers to work in their CBD office, which seems a little extreme. Coming into work just so the local café can make a profit seems a bit silly, although the fact remains that if too many people stop coming into the CBD, it risks dying, and a city without a beating heart is not much of a city.

It will be interesting to see how our productivity figures look before and after lockdown. Although workplace attendance and habits are definitely changing, as I sit in weekend traffic jams, I am reminded that many of our old problems are returning and that lockdown didn't create the big change that some predicted.

The beautiful thing

At the same time, as the traffic slowly crawls along, I'm grateful that I'm in a better position than most people in the world. I am also reminded that although the state gets a bad rap at times – Nanny State is one of the most insulting things you can say to a politician – a robust public sector that can use its considerable powers to successfully manage a crisis such as a worldwide pandemic is a beautiful thing.

LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION, AND AGILITY FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN A CHANGED WORLD

STEPHEN JACK, Managing Director and Vice President of Workday Australia and New Zealand, looks at how the public sector has the opportunity to lead organisational change after COVID-19.

The pandemic has provided a catalyst for change beyond anyone's imagination. Here in New Zealand, while we are in a better place than most countries, there remains a clear and present danger. We just need to lend an eye to our cousins across the Tasman to see what could be.

In many ways, our operational challenges are similar to anywhere else in the world – we may just be at a different stage. But the disruption has a new and darker dimension. Darker for the economy and darker in terms of the uncertainty about what will come of this.

Stephen Jack

There are many questions about how we will emerge. This "new normal" is forcing a rethink about existing operational models, about working structures, and about the way organisations should deliver products and services. The phrase "organisational agility" is becoming increasingly ubiquitous.

As communities and economic sectors start to recover from the crisis, there is an inevitable major focus on several critical questions:

- How will leaders lead their organisations?
- How do they determine which changes implemented during the crisis will remain?
- How do they re-engage with employees?
- What impact will the crisis have on decision making around existing organisational models?
- How do leaders remain authentic as they steer their organisation through the recovery stage?

What is clear is that we can't go back to what we were doing pre-COVID. We must change how we work, and to put it bluntly, as Grant Robertson has said, we can't waste this crisis.

This journal has included comments along the same lines, such as those from Evon Currie, General Manager of Community and Population Health for Canterbury District Health Board, when she commented: "Business as usual has to disappear."

The opportunity of COVID-19

If you were to gather opinion about whether the public or private sector is seen as more efficient, you would probably find a majority saying the private sector is the better.

The public sector has been shouldered with descriptors such as "bureaucratic", "red tape", and "cumbersome" for as long as most people can remember. It's a legacy that most of us would not be proud of and it is not necessarily true either.

> WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT WE CAN'T GO BACK TO WHAT WE WERE DOING PRE-COVID.

New Zealand boasts some of the most efficient e-government initiatives and processes of any country in the world. Technology has been embraced and put into action to deliver a truly 21st century service for the country.

However, the label remains, and we are still seen as followers of the more "nimble" commercial sector.

Well, this is probably not the case any more. COVID-19 has changed this. It has created a level playing field between sectors and provided an opportunity for innovation and the adoption of agility never seen before. It is the catalyst and has brought a blank canvas to what we can create in the future.

We can't go back to what we had before, so what does the future hold for the public sector?

Do as we do

Leadership, innovation, and agility are three concepts that can be owned by the public sector – through this, it can be an example of a new way of working.

There is an important dialogue already happening, covering topics such as:

- adapting to the new way of working
- understanding operational resilience
- prioritising innovation
- using technology and process changes to improve workforce management
- strengthening business continuity through organisational agility.

The public sector can lead this discussion alongside being proactive in improving our organisations further.

Our recent experience shows that the public sector is very good at achieving a huge amount in a short space of time when the need becomes a must.

Just look at the Wage Subsidy implementation and the delivery of critical public services as the country closed down, people moved home, and we were cut off from each other.

NEW ZEALAND BOASTS SOME OF THE MOST EFFICIENT E-GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AND PROCESSES OF ANY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD.

As Brook Barrington, Chief Executive of the DPMC commented in an earlier issue of this journal: "The scale and complexity of the all-of-government response to COVID-19 has been unprecedented. The fast-moving nature of the situation, both internationally and domestically, required the public sector to be agile and collaborative." Our case study is world leading.

The fact is the public sector can move mountains in a short space of time. However, this is how we have worked for decades. Which begs the question, what more could we achieve if we move to an even more efficient level of operating?

Pandemic + disruption = transformation

There is a belief that at times of disruption, organisations that are bold, agile, and take opportunities and "go for it" are those that will be successful.

We've already seen a lot of examples of the pandemic breeding agility, but more could be achieved by using cloud-based technology.

The time is ripe to digitally enable core processes; deliver better outcomes for customers, citizens, and employees; and to do so at a lower cost by accelerating technology deployment into a new generation of cloud-computing, platform-enabled technology.

It is hard to continue to give great customer service and cut costs at the same time, but this is what has to happen. The only way to achieve this is to change the technology we've relied on for years.

Being driven by customers and their experience is also about making processes more efficient. This philosophy is as applicable to the public sector as much as commercial businesses. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the reliance on business models and older technology that will no longer guarantee business continuity and effective operations.

Embracing flexibility

Following our working-from-home lockdown experience, there is now a desire for more flexibility.

But there are two sides to this: yes, we need to look after people's desire to have more flexibility between home and work, but the added flexibility must work from a management perspective too, which is where technology can help.

So how does the public sector realign its operational models?

Not all organisations will be able to immediately throw off their legacy systems. For many, this will be a mind-shift too far – it's akin to ignoring history; after all, they are called legacy systems for a reason.

There is a practical alternative – cloud-computing platforms. Organisations should embrace Software as a Service (SaaS). Senior public sector management and boards need to have "shift to cloud" on their agendas – they cannot afford to sit back and operate in the pre-COVID way.

I recently hosted a webinar entitled "Leadership, Innovation, and Agility in a Changing World" to discuss how businesses can prepare for the new normal. I was joined by David Thodey, deputy chair of Australia's National COVID-19 Coordination Commission (NCCC). He was a convincing advocate for the belief that at times of disruption organisations must take opportunities. David provided some key pointers:

- Be bold and be resilient
- Be innovative in looking for different ways to operate
- Embrace the new cloud-based world of technology
- Don't look for instant perfection
- Take a team with you
- Be resolute, honest, and realistic because there will be naysayers
- Understand it is OK to change along the way if a pivot or modification is needed
- And importantly – be yourself!

Can it be business as unusual for the public sector?

Long-term public service chief executive Kevin Lavery put a perspective on this in the recent IPANZ journal when he said: "Local government can contribute to the recovery … crises lead to innovation. Local and central government will help us get through the recovery. All the ingredients are there for a lot of innovation, and we need to do that. There are a lot of hard decisions ahead; it's a tough but exciting time. This is the time you can do new things – it's a time for leadership."

THE FACT IS THE PUBLIC SECTOR CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS IN A SHORT SPACE OF TIME.

Leadership in this respect will involve some hard analysis of the types of technology systems that are needed to provide innovation and agility in the future. The need for public service is increasing all the time, and our customers, the people of New Zealand, are demanding higher standards. We have the ability to lead this transformation and to steal a march on some of our private sector peers. We could even consign those less than complimentary labels related to bureaucracy to the history books.

To take a line from probably one of the highest profile public servants of recent months, Dr Ashley Bloomfield: "Leadership is an invitation to collective action." While the pandemic has caused upheaval, it is offering the public sector an opportunity to collaborate and lead how we can work and serve in the future.

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