Manager's Message
Michael Phillips

Welcome to our final Newsletter for the year. We hope that this finds you well.

What a year it has been for the Cluster. Building on the great work done by former Cluster Managers Dr Jon Gray and Michelle Carden, this year saw the appointment of the Cluster's first full-time Manager. A role I feel privileged to hold. This increased committment was the result of both Jon's and Michelle's promotion of the need for more Australian ICT Innovation in public administration. Major stakeholders the ACT Government and NICTA agreed. My role is ably supported by our dedicated Executive Office, Ana Belgun. Together, and with the guidance of the Steering Committee and support of Members we are off and running with a revamped business plan.

Since the last Newsletter we have:

- Reviewed achievements and goals leading to a new Business Plan
- From the Business Plan built a month-by-month Activities Plan which schedules the events; meetings; communications; administrative tasks and other priority activities critical to success
- Had well over 100 meetings with people and organizations interested in Australian ICT innovation in government
- Fulfilled important roles on related organisations like CollabIT
- Represented the Cluster at a number of Conferences (see later in the newsletter)
- Had three meetings of our Steering Committee; and participated in formal reporting to the ACT and Federal governments
- Commenced our first Collaborative Project (refer below) bringing together government, industry and research to solution critical agency needs; we now have three other such projects in the pipeline

Upcoming Events

NICTA TechFest 2013
Great Hall, Parliament House Canberra, 13 February 2013

For more information and to register for this event, please click here

- Reviewed the Cluster policy framework leading to major revisions of the Terms-of-Reference; Collaborative Project Policy and the Collaborative Project Agreement
- Reviewed our marketing and communications leading to a project to a refresh of our brand and related collateral, and a complete revamp of the website.

On this last point, please accept our apologies for the poor state of the website. We hope to have the new branding, etc. finalised in the next week and the website rebuilt by early next year. We appreciate your patience.

So what is our mission? The Cluster is a grouping of passionate people and organizations who think our public sector should use a lot more of Australia's innovative ICT solutions. Governments are saying they see ICT playing a major role in three areas: improving productivity; improving services; and in being more open. Other countries have similar drivers and we see in some of these much stronger strategic alliances between large providers; agile, creative small businesses; and the research community. Coupled with well-developed collaborative models to encourage the generation of innovative solutions to enable rapid transformational advancements.

I mentioned above our first Collaborative Project. This is a very exciting development for the Cluster. Not just for the symbolism, not just because it enables us to test the Collaborative Project concept; but because it is dealing with a real business requirement in a modern ICT enabled world. The Project involves the development of a device independent, mobile app' accessing data sets provided under the open data initiative in the ACT. The parties involved are: the ACT Government; NICTA Software Engineering Group; and Imagine Solutions P/L. The Cluster of course is both the facilitator and coordinator.

The other three projects in the pipeline deal with digital transition; cyber security; and the 'Canberra as a digital city' concept.

Finally - what are our plans for the next few months? The headline items include: conducting a member survey, completing the re-branding and revamped communications program; progressing the above Collaborative Project and commencing one or two of the others in the pipeline; finishing a White Paper on Open Data; and running some critical member events (more details to follow).

I'd like to also draw your attention to the 2013 NICTA showcase - TechFest. You'll find the full details below. TechFest will give attendees the unique opportunity to a wide

range of world leading Australian ICT solutions; and engage with the people involved in one easy location. I hope you can be there.

So in signing off, can I on behalf of the Cluster team and Steering Committee wish you all a safe and happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. We look forward to a great 2013 and we hope you do too.

Michael Phillips

eGov Cluster Manager

Featured Member

Zakaria Bouguettaya, Imagine Team

What is the company about; what are your goals?

Our company specialises in mobile app development, and providing end to end solutions. Our goals are to establish ourselves as the mobile development house in Canberra, and to provide apps people find useful.

Why did you join the cluster?

We joined the cluster to learn more about how Government interacts with private companies and to explore opportunities involving mobile apps for Canberra.

What problem does your technology solve for

government?

The technology being developed for the Cluster collaborative project 'Mobile Canberra' provides a platform agnostic mobile app, through which Canberrans can view and find events, points of interest, and services around them in real-time.

What, in your view, are the hot technology topics in government at the moment?

A hot topic is most definately the prominence of smart phone technologies, and the impact these new technologies have on various government services and departments.

What interests you most about working with Government?

The opportunity to reach a wide audience, and to understand the process of collecting and aggregating customer feedback from different interest groups, and of course, seeing our apps help people.

What is the biggest impediment or frustration you have found working with government?

While understandable, the procurement process is quite complex and rigid. It is sometimes difficult to map the ever-changing technology of smart phones to the oft-rigid tender process. In the early stages of our company, we found it difficult to find the right representatives to talk to.

Featured Events

Technology in Government and the Public Sector Canberra 13-14 August 2012

The Cluster had a stand at this event and attracted a lot of interest from attendees. One of the nice features of this event for the Cluster was that the Trade Show involved

mostly SMEs (small to medium enterprises) who are a very important cohort for us.

The Conference proper had a very interesting and diverse range of subjects with a number of high profile and well-credentialed keynote speakers. The highlight for me was the presentation by the CIO of Vic Roads, Susan Sly. Susan and her organisation's formal use of social media; use of collaborative models at requirements' definition stage of procurement and her passion for innovation all resonate with the Cluster's mission.

Big Data Analytics

Melbourne 28-29 August 2012

A very topical subject and although the participation at this conference was not large – approximately 80, it did bring together a number of leading technical experts and business practitioners.

The focus was very much 'state-of-play'. On the one hand, there have been a number of radical technology developments from organisations like Google and Facebook, which are generating new possibilities. On the other hand data itself is expanding rapidly in both volumes and complexity especially considering social media, video, and even email. Traditional providers in this area are also endeavouring to capitalize on the opportunities the fresh focus on data mining presents.

What about a definition? This was refined in the course of the Conference and came down to a set of characteristics rather than a statement. 'V5'.- volume; velocity; value; variety; veracity.

Perhaps the most topical issue discussed was how the ICT professionals in this area – the term being touted was Information Architects; and the business leads work effectively together. Or put more crudely – who owns the new big data capability, business or ICT. My answer: to quote an eminent ICT professional I know "There are no ICT projects; just business projects with varying degrees of ICT criticality".

FutureGovSummit Australia

Canberra 18-19 September 2012

This is one of the best-formatted and run conferences I have attended. It included a combination of the usual keynote presentations along with ten round-table discussions each on a different subject. The organisation of this complex event was impressively smooth and classy, to the point for example of using electronic polling to get participant perspectives on key topics.

Standout keynote for me was Reinhard Posch the CIO for the Austrian Federal Government. It was a little surprising to me to hear that the issues which are prominent here in Australia are pretty much those Reinhard faces. However Reinhard was able to cover them with simple yet attractive language and apply a practical business perspective which when combined provided a number of fresh insights.

My conclusion from the conference is that we are witnessing right now a new phenomenon. Government is progressing at restricted pace due to fiscal constraints and deep-seated cultural limitations. ICT however is progressing at warp speed and its uptake by citizens and employees will increasingly highlight the ever expanding gap. Realignment so that public administration can capitalise on the benefits new ICT can provide may well depend on a paradigm shift in thinking rather than any organic or evolutionary approach.

IIM ACT Branch Workshop Day "IM for IT Professionals and IT for IM Practitioners"

Canberra 12 September 2012

The workshop was organised over one day and across two concurrent streams: Stream IT for IM and Stream IM for IT. The key note speaker, Margaret Chalker from National Archives of Australia, spoke about challenges and

opportunities since she took the lead role for the Government Information Management branch in 2007.

Under the 'IT for IM Practitioners' stream, speakers engaged the audience in tackling issues like: risks and costs of implementing large Information Management Projects, recent developments in e-discovery law and impacts on IM and IT policies, the Business Intelligence Continuum which is progressing from reporting and analysis to more advanced analytics.

Under the 'IM for IT Professionals' stream, presenters spoke about information management architecture, practical approaches to developing an information governance program, techniques and approaches which allow organisations to take advantage of 'Big Information' and turn it into the actionable ' Better Intelligence'.

The underlying conclusion of both streams was that the success of EDRMS (Electronic Document and Records Management System) implementations is not just a pure IT issue, nor a pure IM issue, but that it needs a mutual-understanding of each other's needs and expectations.

Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA) and Australian Services Roundtable - Telework Lunch Seminar Canberra 24 September 2012

The Lunch Seminar was part of the 2012 Telework Event Lunch Series which focused on the challenges of introducing a flexible working strategy that benefits the organisation and employees, through cost savings, efficiencies and better work/life balances.
The panel included Dr Yvette Clount (Macquarie University) who researched the impact Telework has had and will have on communities and organisation throughout Australia; Peter Walton (CEO of Infoxchange) who implemented teleworking in his organisation; Jack Dan (Telstra National Manager for Government Relations) and Hala Betanah (Microsoft) who both experienced teleworking rolled out in their organisations.

The current issues with implementing teleworking, discussed by the panellists were isolation, disconnection from colleagues, perception and respect for teleworking, trust, existence of a framework, resistance to change, suitability of a job for teleworking. In relation to the OHS, some lessons were provided; for example, Telstra and other companies have implemented measures like statutory declarations from teleworking employees that they can provide a proper environment in addition to regular inspections.
Panellists also offered some tips to tackle the cultural issues

in relation to teleworking. For example, they discussed about socialising the concept within the organisation, direct meetings between tele and not teleworking staff, popularising the effectiveness and efficiency of the practices of teleworking internally.

The overall conclusion was that in the majority of cases, teleworking cannot be implemented fully in an organisation, especially in the public sector and a thorough evaluation of a teleworking programme is needed before the rollout.

Among the benefits, the participants outlined: family – work balance, job satisfaction, other local career options, reduced staff turnover (in the long term), increased productivity, less time spent commuting, management by results rather than presenteeism, encouragement of diversity in the workplace, flexibility, mobility. Enhancing the advantages while reducing the costs, a Smart Work Centre can be used for Government agencies; it would improve collaboration between different Government agencies and also it would tackle the isolation of teleworking employees. Microsoft is currently using successfully the Smart Centres in Sydney and other parts of Australia.

Featured Topic

Open Data

What is it?
An initiative by governments here and internationally to provide their data sets to the public.
A number of Australian government administrations have created open data 'portals' and have loaded up a broad range of data files covering such diverse information as toilet locations, bikeways, public transport data, locations of artistic works, crime statistics and many more. Sometimes the portals also provide APIs (application programming interface) to facilitate access to use of the data in external applications. APIs are quickly becoming a "must have" feature of any open data site.

Who's doing it?
In Australia the federal and all state/territory jurisdictions have established open data programs. Local councils are also developing open data programs. Many, but not all, of these have already implemented an open data portal.
There are many governments globally also embracing the initiative. Sophisticated open data environments exist for example in the UK, Singapore, and the USA.

Who's using it?

In fact this question is a little challenging. There is anecdotal information on who is enquiring about use, etc but at this stage no firm statistics.

Most interest to date is coming from companies wanting to use the data to create new apps, researchers and data-driven journalists. There are also the normal hits from people just interested in seeing what's available and what it might disclose. In each of these cases, it is ultimately citizens who benefit, whether it be from using web and mobile applications, reading informed news articles, and so on. This is the good news.

What's in prospect?

On the down side questions yet to be adequately addressed in many jurisdictions involve: data quality; consistent intra and inter jurisdictional data classifications (meta-data); data update frequencies and the impact of changes to structure; etc.

There is significant interest from both the commercial and research sectors in addressing these and other related concerns.

NICTA's interest?

NICTA and the e-Government Cluster believe 'Open Data' is a very positive development which presents many opportunities for high-impact innovation and new wealth creation. Improving data veracity (and information about data quality) will encourage new business opportunities and solutions. Creating enhanced data sets – even ones as simple as federated compilations will further enhance prospects. At the front-end increasing automation of processes will not only deliver savings to government but also mean more timely updates to datasets for public consumption.

Another area where NICTA sees a lot of potential is in expanding the open data model through 'crowd-sourcing' - data acquisition from citizens. The low hanging fruit here for example is enabling citizens to report damaged public property or potholes in roads and so forth. More novel applications include crowd-sourcing data during cyclones and other emergency situations.

NICTA is also keen to support the community of open data hackers and application developers. Several startups in the United States have demonstrated that it is possible to develop billion dollar companies built on open data. Governments in Australia can actively support the burgeoning tech' startup scene in Australia by ensuring they are fully committed to open data, and NICTA wants to help make that happen.

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