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RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Public Sector Collaboration: Are We Doing It Well and Could We Do It Better?*

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Improving collaboration by public sector agencies is an important element of many public sector reforms. Common approaches include introducing responsibilities under legislation and policy decisions, the provision of information and guidance, and strengthening third-party oversight. To identify how collaboration is being practised, this paper reviews evidence from over one hundred reports by Auditors-General and Ombudsmen in Australia and New Zealand to identify key attributes of collaboration, and assesses these further by examining three reports in detail. It concludes that problems that have been known for many years continue to constrain public sector effectiveness. Although continuing existing approaches may assist in improving collaboration, the paper argues that there is a need to adopt more systematic approaches to organisational capacity for collaboration. It further identifies that changes in the external environment such as technology-based innovation may demand rapid progress and change in relation to collaboration.

Key words: collaboration, working together, coordination, public sector, watchdog, Auditor-General, Ombudsman

There has been a long-standing public policy focus on joined-up government (Wilkins 2002) with variants described as collaborative government and whole-of-government (O'Flynn et al. 2011). The Auditor-General New South Wales (NSW) observed that successive NSW Governments have been promoting collaboration between departments since the 1990s (2006).

Collaboration has been recognised widely as challenging for public sector managers.

However, encouragement is also often provided, as illustrated in the following comment:

[w]hen agencies work together, with the community, with industry and with other levels of government, it brings benefits and outcomes which are otherwise not possible. Collaboration is worth the effort but it takes ongoing conversation, co-operation and commitment (Queensland Public Sector Commission 2009: 12).

The priority given to collaboration is illustrated by a senior leader in Tasmania introducing a collaboration resource with the opening statement “[w]orking together effectively across Tasmanian Government agencies is a key internal challenge faced by the Tasmanian State Service” (Tasmania Department of Premier and Cabinet 2010).

While there are many definitions of collaboration, this paper uses the term in the broad sense of working together consistent with the observation that “[c]ollaboration means joint

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working or working in conjunction with others. It implies actors—individuals, groups or organisations—cooperating in some endeavour” (Wanna 2008: 3).

Typical approaches to improving collaboration include the introduction of responsibilities under legislation and policy decisions, the provision of information and guidance, and strengthening third-party oversight. These approaches are reviewed in the following paragraphs along with the stimulus provided by new collaborative technologies.

Specifying in legislation cross-government collaboration as one of the roles and responsibilities of agency heads is a form of persuasion. It has been implemented recently for the Commonwealth entities with new legislation encouraging officials of the entity “to cooperate with others to achieve common objectives, where practicable” (*Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*). Specific collaborations are often identified through Cabinet decisions particularly where more than one Ministerial portfolio is involved (Wilkins 2011).

There is also an extensive array of sources of practical information and guidance regarding public sector collaboration, normally emanating from central agencies. Generally, such resources encourage public sector agencies to collaborate to increase effectiveness and efficiency. They include collaboration between agencies and with third parties, including not-for-profit and private sector organisations (see for instance Victorian State Services Authority 2007 and Queensland Public Sector Commission 2009). Further, this may also include case studies demonstrating the utility of collaboration (for example, see Nous Group 2013 for eight case studies that are identified as examples of successful collaboration).

A National Collaboration Framework is linked to the Commonwealth legislation encouraging cooperation with others. It was created recently to assist the Commonwealth entities to work collaboratively with state, territory, and local jurisdictions to achieve government objectives. It provides an approach for “entities to follow when seeking to collaborate and

reduces costs, time and risk associated with program or project development and delivery” (Department of Finance 2014).

External oversight and accountability processes provide additional pressures to collaborate. They are also an essential feature of good practice. For instance, Capability Reviews by the Australian Public Service Commission assess, as one of ten elements, the agency’s capacity to “collaborate and build common purpose” which addresses “... the agency’s ability to work across government and beyond to address crosscutting issues” (Australian Public Service Commission 2012: 224). Specific collaborations arising from Cabinet decisions may include requirements for evaluations of implementation and outcomes (Wilkins 2011).

The rapid emergence and integration of digital technologies into the daily lives of people, businesses, and governments provide new opportunities for government collaboration and public administration reforms more generally (Katsonis and Botros 2015; OECD 2014; Rowland-Campbell et al. 2014). The change from static read-only websites to more dynamic and dialogue-based applications such as social networking sites, blogs and wikis has led to the use of the term ‘Web 2.0’, while the term ‘Government 2.0’ points similarly to the use of new collaborative tools and approaches by government agencies. Much is expected of these changes, with a Digital Transformation Office housed in the Prime Minister’s Department having a goal of seamless digital services joining the three levels of government (Easton 2015). Collaboration will be essential to this task, but it is yet to be seen whether and to what extent the digital technologies help overcome or bypass the traditional barriers to effective collaboration.

Despite the practical attention paid to collaboration within government, Blackman (2014: 174) has argued that there has been little academic research or a systematic study into the successes and limitations of approaches to collaboration. However, interest by researchers is evident, with ANZSOG producing a monograph of contributed papers on collaborative governance (O’Flynn and Wanna 2008) and

a recent book focusing on connecting across boundaries to achieve goals (O'Flynn et al. 2014).

In looking at lessons from experiences of collaboration, key areas of uncertainty have been identified, including that:

[f]rom within government there is a belief that collaboration works best when responsibilities are clear and when a lead agency or 'champion' has been selected. Is this empirically valid? Can responsibilities be clearly separated in collaborative ventures and can leadership be successfully anointed in an a priori manner? How can the momentum for collaboration be generated and sustained? (Wanna 2008: 11).

In this paper, we examine these and other questions through the work of independent watchdog agencies such as Auditors-General and Ombudsmen. Reports by these agencies provide an important yet largely untapped source of independent evidence and analysis regarding collaboration and governance practices. We first summarise how watchdogs have approached collaboration before explaining the sources we have drawn on in our research. We then summarise the findings from our analysis of 112 watchdog reports as context for the detailed examination of three reports focused on child protection issues. We then analyse the findings in light of the broader literature before concluding.

Watchdogs Providing Information and Guidance

Reports by Auditors-General and Ombudsmen provide independent information, findings, and recommendations about how well collaboration is being practised across a broad range of settings. Sometimes collaboration is their direct focus, and on other occasions the need for collaboration becomes evident in reporting on performance.

Watchdog reports tend to focus on areas where performance can be improved rather than documenting areas that are performing well and may give emphasis to clear and controllable goals, sufficient authority and information, and clear consequences (Bemelens-Videc

2003; Wilkins and Boyle 2011). It has been observed that over time Auditor-General approaches to performance audits have accommodated multi-agency projects with a focus on joined-up work (Wilkins and Lonsdale 2007).

Some watchdog reports make a case for collaboration by interpreting legislation, by assessing the policy context, and by direct assertion of its importance for effective services. For instance, the Auditor-General of NSW identified that government agencies and licensees needed to work together to reduce alcohol-related crime (Auditor-General NSW 2008: 2) whereas the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Auditor-General cited a National Framework to argue that many portfolio areas as well as families, communities, and business all have a role in child protection (Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Auditor-General's Office 2013: 146).

Indeed, watchdogs provide evidence-based analysis and use illustrative case studies of practical problems to make the case for improved collaboration. For instance, a report by the Queensland Ombudsman in 2013 illustrated the impact on citizens of the lack of coordination between agencies where a citizen was told after an extended period that their complaint to an agency was not within its jurisdiction or where no agency would accept responsibility for an issue (Queensland Ombudsman 2013).

Watchdogs have also identified that collaboration is only applicable where it enables the achievement of results "... that could not have been achieved by any one of the agencies working alone", pointing to various risks to coordination as well as benefits (Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) 2012: 39–40).

Additionally, some but not all watchdogs have adopted the practice of producing better practice guides based on findings from their investigations (Wilkins and Lonsdale 2007). The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) is one such watchdog and issued jointly with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) a Better Practice Guide on policy implementation that pointed to the need to consider both the costs and benefits of collaboration (ANAO and PM&C 2014: 25). More specifically, the Commonwealth Auditor-General identified a better practice principle

relating to the content of cross-agency agreements after reviewing 200 agreements between Commonwealth agencies (ANAO 2010: 24).

Watchdog reports also have impacts that include improving performance and contributing to accountability. These benefits potentially arise from many different aspects of the report development and publication process (Loocke and Put 2011). Process stages where such impacts can be felt include anticipation during the investigation, the implementation of recommendations, the wider application of learnings, media coverage, and parliamentary debates and committee hearings.

Notwithstanding this existing body of work, watchdog reports have not been used extensively by researchers or practitioners as a source of information on sector-wide collaboration issues. Having recognised this, our research project drew on 112 reports of Auditors-General and Ombudsmen and their analysis of collaboration issues, organised in relation to the three domains of governance, capacity, and information.

Method

We used a broad-based search strategy to identify a pool of potential reports by Australian and New Zealand Auditors-General and Ombudsmen. The first phase involved scanning the listings of reports for the period of 2009 to 2014, identifying significant earlier reports, and discussions with the Heads of Performance Audit and Deputy Ombudsman to identify reports that addressed collaboration in some way. In all, 112 reports were found to have content relevant to collaboration in the context of this paper (Table 1). Two-thirds of the reports were by Auditors-General while the most prominent jurisdiction was Victoria, which made up almost 30% of the total. The years when the reports were tabled in Parliament ranged from 1998 to 2015.

In a second phase, the 112 reports were subjected to a high-level review of their contents to identify reports that had substantive material regarding collaboration and related governance issues. Nine of the 112 reports were

Table 1. Characteristics of the 112 reports found to have content relevant to collaboration in the context of this project: number and years when tabled in Parliament

	Auditor-General	Ombudsman	Total
Commonwealth	8 2007–2014	6 2009–2014	14
ACT	3 2013	0	3
NSW	9 2006–2013	10 2011–2014	19
NT	2 2010–2013	1 2011	3
NZ	7 2007–2015	1 2011–2013	8
Qld	6 2004–2014	2 2011–2013	8
Tas	2 2011–2013	0	2
Vic	19 2008–2014	14 2009–2014	33
WA	19 1998–2014	3 2011–2014	22
Total	75	37	112

selected because they were identified as having rich content regarding collaboration. They were analysed in detail to gain deeper insights into the approaches to collaboration involved.

A comparison of the characteristics of collaboration found in the literature, in conjunction with the review of watchdog reports, identified three broad collaboration domains relevant to the report material, namely: governance, capacity, and information. These encompass many of the characteristics identified in the literature such as formal structures, culture and leadership (O'Flynn et al. 2014); or clear mandate, shared understanding of objectives and capabilities (Blackman 2014). However, a number of characteristics identified in the literature were not included within these three domains as they are matters of broad context and are not typically addressed by watchdogs in their reports. For instance, we omitted characteristics identified by others such as power and politics, formal structures, and budget (O'Flynn et al. 2014).

The three collaboration domains and related characteristics were developed and refined

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progressively through the course of the research. Reports were reviewed by reading executive summaries, using key word searches, reading relevant text and manually categorising the characteristics identified, and cataloguing relevant examples. The judgements involved were made by the first-named author taking account of the discussions with Heads of Performance Audit and Deputy Ombudsman, and reviewed by the two other authors of this paper. Although this approach identified a large number of reports incorporating relevant content, it should be recognised that it did not identify all the possible reports or all the relevant content in the reports selected, and what follows needs to be regarded as illustrative rather than definitive.

Key Issues Identified from 112 Watchdog Reports

Some of the key issues identified along with some of the recommended public sector responses are presented in Table 2.

Overall, the reports reviewed identified a wide range of practices and factors that support and hinder working together. It was clear that governance issues were raised more often than the other two domains and that there was only limited or no coverage of some aspects of capacity including issues around leadership, commitment, and relationships.

Care is needed in considering the summary content of Table 2 as it generalises interpretations and findings based on specific evidence in individual watchdog reports. However, the table does enable a high-level assessment of the collaboration issues identified and in doing so, shows that the watchdog reports have addressed some of the key problems and identified the appropriate responses implemented by the public sector.

Also, as already noted, there is an inherent bias in the sample of collaboration issues addressed in watchdog reports as such reports mainly include areas where performance is problematic. However, the frequency with which their reports raised concerns indicates that public sector effectiveness and efficiency

is likely to be constrained by problems encountered with key aspects of collaboration.

The importance of selecting a governance model for working together is illustrated in a report by the Victorian Auditor-General that observed that the model of a Secretaries' Group did not encourage collaboration or coherence and concluded that there had been:

a siloed approach in the past which worked against achieving vital collaboration between stakeholders. Yet the model chosen . . . perpetuated the model of multiple stakeholders each responsible for their own piece of the recovery task . . . Without clear authority and with funding controlled by each department, the key governance committee . . . inevitably had a coordination rather than a leadership role (Victorian Auditor-General 2013: viii).

Regarding formalised agreements, the Commonwealth Auditor-General observed in a report reviewing 200 agreements that formal written agreements between the Commonwealth agencies were frequently used to facilitate productive cross-agency relationships. However, it noted that many overlooked key provisions and important aspects of relationship management, risk management, outcome reporting and review, and that "[i]n many instances, the agreements provided only a perfunctory basis for building inter-agency collaboration" (ANAO 2010: 17).

Capacity is raised as a broad issue in relation to collaboration in watchdog reports that address government's relationships with not-for-profit organisations. For instance, a report by the Commonwealth Ombudsman on funding agreements with regional and remote Indigenous organisations highlighted the importance of assessing the capability of those organisations. It cites an example of an Indigenous organisation that encountered significant difficulties in understanding and meeting complex reporting requirements, stating that this was evident at a reasonably early stage in the various communication exchanges between the parties. This pointed to the need to provide appropriate training and support (Commonwealth Ombudsman 2010).

Table 2. Key collaboration issues and corresponding recommended public sector approaches

Issue	Recommended public sector approach
Governance	
Clarity about options for working together including governance models	Analyse relevant options including where responsibilities are shared, and where responsibilities are clearly defined.
Central agency role	Consider giving a central agency overarching responsibility for collaboration by the agencies in the jurisdiction, and clearly identify and differentiate responsibilities and accountabilities of the central agency.
Role of legislation	Assess legislation for barriers to collaboration and use business case analysis to address these.
Formalised agreements	Document when and how collaboration will occur and provide a coherent system.
Risk management, performance monitoring and evaluation	Collaborate in identification and management of risks taking into account collaboration arrangements, performance monitoring, and evaluation; develop approaches to evaluating collaboration directly.
Capacity	
Capacity	Take into account capacity issues identified in relation to the not-for-profit sector in developing collaboration practice in other contexts.
Leadership, relationships and trust	Develop approaches that take into account the less-tangible enablers of collaboration.
Information	
Information management	Draw together information and analyse it systematically to support collaboration.
Communicating	Share information to assist in planning and managing programmes and to identify additional opportunities for collaboration.

Information issues including communication and engagement with stakeholders are raised as a way to enhance collaboration. For instance, a report on Perth's Swan River recommended that the key agency (the Swan River Trust) works with businesses and the community as well as with other government agencies (Auditor General Western Australia (WA) 2014).

Further Insights Identified from Detailed Review of Three Watchdog Reports

To gain further insights into key collaboration issues, we drew on three specific watchdog reports from among the nine reports whose content we assessed in detail. The three reports, delivered by three separate watchdogs, investigated aspects of child protection in the context that collaboration between state/territory agencies is widely recognised as an essential component of an effective child protection system (Council of Australian Governments 2009). For

instance, during the second reading speech of the *Western Australian Children and Community Development 2003 Bill* (which later became the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (CCS Act), the (then) Minister stated that:

[t]he Bill promotes a collaborative approach between the Department for Community Development and other agencies in the provision of social services and provides for interagency cooperation, particularly in relation to the protection and care of children ... (quoted in Ombudsman WA 2011: 39)

The three reports span the years 2011 to 2014. One by the WA Ombudsman is focused relatively tightly on care planning and involved detailed analysis of case files, whereas the other two by the NSW Ombudsman and ACT Auditor-General are broader investigations of the respective child protection systems. They are:

- (1) *Review of the NSW Child Protection System - Are things improving?* (Ombudsman NSW 2014) which is a follow-up of an earlier report. The 2014 report outlines analysis of recent data and discusses a number of issues relating to the quality of intra- and inter-agency child protection practice. It builds on the earlier report that discussed a number of critical challenges that needed to be met as part of reforming the child protection system.
- (2) *Planning for children in care: An Ombudsman's own motion investigation into the administration of the care planning provisions of the Children and Community Services Act 2004* (Ombudsman WA 2011) which looked at how State Government agencies have administered the requirements of the CCS Act regarding care planning for children in care. In particular the report looked at whether the child protection agency had established appropriate policies and procedures; was appropriately complying with the requirements for the preparation, timing, and review of care plans; and the health and education agencies were undertaking their roles in accordance with their agreements with the child protection agency and with the related policies and procedures of the three agencies.
- (3) *Care and Protection System* (ACT Auditor-General's Office 2013) which reviewed the Territory's care and protection services for children and young people who are considered to be at high risk and vulnerable, and whether the child protection agency was providing adequate and immediate support to these children and young people, and if these services were being monitored and overseen by relevant statutory office holders.

Examples of the key collaboration issues from the three reports (Table 3) illustrate the broader observations from our review of the 112 reports. They highlight in relation to governance the importance of being clear about responsibilities and the roles of central agencies, legislation, formalised agreements,

and risk management. They also highlight the importance of collaboration capacity and identify issues of leadership and commitment, and the importance of systematic approaches to information management and effective communication.

Analysis

Many of the problems regarding collaboration identified in watchdog reports are associated with agencies not following well-established better practice guidance. In general, the problems involved have been known for many years. This raises the question of whether the three common measures to improve collaboration (introducing responsibilities under legislation and policy, the provision of information and guidance, and strengthening third-party oversight) are an effective mix or whether the problems reflect more deep-seated limitations on agencies' abilities to collaborate.

The effectiveness of introducing responsibilities under legislation and policy has theoretical appeal. However, using general statements may not deliver the level of collaboration desired. For instance, the Ombudsman WA report on care planning identified a number of shortcomings in relation to actions agreed between agencies but not carried out (Ombudsman WA 2011). Only one-third of children in the sample had a health assessment and/or medical examination and just one-fifth had documented education plans, even though these were agreed actions. Notwithstanding, the legislation requires that "... in performing functions under this Act, the CEO must endeavour to work in cooperation with public authorities, non-government agencies and service providers" (Ombudsman WA 2011: 26). Given the difficulties in specifying the exact nature and level of collaboration required, it is understandable that a general provision such as this was included in the legislation. However, it is also notable that reciprocal duties to endeavour to cooperate were not imposed on the health and education agencies.

In addition to the generality of the provisions, the incentives and disincentives for im-

Table 3. Examples of the key collaboration issues drawn from three watchdog reports*

Issue	Examples drawn from the three reports
Governance	
Clarity about options for working together including governance models	Recommended that the child protection agency support strong governance processes to drive implementation (NSW). Identified the responsibility of the lead agency to improve collaboration across government for children, young people and their families (ACT).
Central agency role	Recommended that a central agency consider the observations made in the report as part of its ongoing work to develop and implement a place-based approach to service delivery (NSW).
Role of legislation	Identified that legislation requires interagency cooperation and investigated those cooperative processes (WA). Recommended identification of any legislative amendments needed to facilitate the releasing of information by one agency to another (ACT).
Formalised agreements	Recommended that the agreed processes set out in the MOU be implemented by the nominated agency (WA). Recommended development of a protocol or some other mechanism for cooperatively continuing to work with several relevant agencies to better integrate services internally (ACT).
Risk management, performance monitoring and evaluation	Identified that systematic analysis of risk-related information held by key agencies is required to identify those children who are most in need to direct an appropriate level of resources to this group (NSW). Recommended that agencies collaborate in performance monitoring and evaluation of health care planning for children in care (WA).
Capacity	
Capacity	Identified as a welcome initiative the investment in a comprehensive NGO industry development strategy for the child and family sector (NSW). Identified that two agencies have focussed on establishing cooperative arrangements between agency staff at the district level and embedding these in district office culture and practice (WA).
Leadership, relationships and trust	Recommended that the child protection agency lead the improvement of across-government collaboration for children, young people and their families (ACT). Recommended that the child protection agency support a clear and practical commitment to collaboration (NSW).
Information	
Information management	Identified that the system to systematically share and analyse information held collectively by agencies was not adequate (NSW). Recommended that agencies develop a system to ensure that information they share and publically report is accurate and comprehensive (ACT).
Communicating	Recommended documenting all government collaborative programs and initiatives for vulnerable children, young people and their families, and making this information available to relevant government agencies and their staff, the community and the community services sector (ACT). Identified that more effective communication and collaboration between agencies could have avoided problems relating to joint responses to child protection cases (NSW).

*The three reports are NSW Ombudsman (2014), Ombudsman WA (2011), and ACT Auditor-General's Office (2013).

plementation, and the follow-up and oversight processes involved, may be significant factors in driving the level of actual collaboration at any time. Some of the barriers to joined-up government that have been identified by others (O'Flynn et al. 2011) indicate approaches such as introducing responsibilities under legislation and policy decisions may not, on their own, be particularly effective.

Decisions regarding the appropriate governance model for a particular collaboration need to be carefully considered and watchdogs may need to show persistence in this regard. For instance, the NSW Ombudsman identified in his 2014 report that the issue of shared responsibility raised in his earlier (2011) report had not been addressed adequately, and that there was "... scope for more effectively implementing the notion of 'shared responsibility' for supporting and protecting children" (NSW Ombudsman 2014: 22).

Communication to share information is a basic element underpinning effective collaboration yet it is often not addressed well. For instance, the ACT Auditor-General's Office (2013) observed that although there were many collaborative programs and initiatives being progressed, information on these and how they relate to each other was not readily available. This led to a recommendation to document these programs and initiatives, and make the information available to relevant government agencies and their staff, the community, and the not-for-profit community services sector. The provision of information and guidance by central agencies and watchdogs is likely to be an important source of encouragement for both the motivation and the capacity to collaborate. But again, based on the efforts already made in this regard and the continuing problems, it may not be a response sufficient to actually achieve improved collaboration. Similarly, third-party oversight has not of itself been sufficient to achieve improved collaboration.

Critically, this analysis does not indicate that any of these three approaches should be reduced or altered. Considered in the context of other analyses of the public sector, there are resonances about the need to give much greater emphasis to capacity and to take a fuller ac-

count of the wider public administration and political contexts. For instance, the identification in the two Ombudsman reports of a comprehensive NGO industry development strategy and embedding cooperative arrangements between agency staff at the district level are important (Ombudsman WA 2011 and NSW Ombudsman 2014). Indeed, making findings and recommendations relating to capacity in future may assist in strengthening collaboration.

This is consistent with some of the discussion in the literature. For instance, Wanna (2015) offers hope in relation to the general issue of improving the public sector's ability to address major policy issues, stating that "[m]any of the impediments that afflict our current public bureaucracies and public providers are not insurmountable or unsolvable. But they will require governments to undertake various systemic transformations of structure, substance and process" (Wanna 2015: 6). This is mixed with realism as he notes that "[t]here is much talk of new governance models, but less actual progress on the ground" (2015: 8). He goes on to identify the importance of capacity for collaboration, noting that in many social and economic sectors:

governments feel that they have to collaborate to provide services (co-produce, co-design, co-deliver, etc.), but have not acquired the necessary skills and capabilities to be able to do so successfully and effectively, and their bureaucratic and traditional accountabilities may act as a gravitational pull against such endeavours (Wanna 2015: 4).

Although it is generally helpful to present enablers and barriers for collaboration, it is important that the contextual factors are not overlooked. By way of example, the Nous Group includes as a barrier that:

effective cross-sectoral partnerships can be destabilised by distinctive characteristics of government and its public servants: changing political imperatives, government power as both the rule setter and major funder, an inflexible public sector culture, poor application of accountability requirements, and frequent changes of personnel (Nous Group 2013: 4).

O'Flynn et al. take this further commenting that:

[c]ollaborative, joined-up working requires a supporting architecture which reshapes structures, systems, incentives, and behaviors and, in the longer-term, cultures and norms. Without careful attention to, and investment in, creating this architecture, most attempts at JUG are doomed to fail, as the power of embedded ways of doing things restrains innovation and undermines cooperation (O'Flynn et al. 2011: 253).

Systematic approaches to assessing organisational capacity for change have been developed for information technology projects over many years (Office of the Auditor General of Canada 2011). An assessment in the Australian context has focused on organisations working together in joined-up initiatives, finding that "... not only does there need to be readiness in terms of the change itself, but that there also needs to be readiness in the capacity of the organisation to work together, both within and across organisations" and providing a diagnostic tool that enables organisations to assess their preparedness for complex change of this type (Blackman et al. 2013: 1).

Case study work undertaken in five agencies indicated that seven macro-level elements (three enablers and four barriers) made a difference for all of the cases:

Enablers: Clear Mandate and Central Leadership, Pattern Breaking Behaviour, and Shared Understanding of Objectives and Outcomes; and Barriers: Organisational Focus, Operational Structure and 'Core Business', Staff Turnover, Decision Making and Capabilities, and Misalignment of Evaluation and Accountability (Blackman et al. 2013: 7).

In general, these enablers and barriers align with the watchdog reports, although "Pattern Breaking Behaviour" and "Decision Making and Capabilities" are areas that correspond with aspects that were not addressed extensively by watchdogs. The creation of such a diagnostic tool opens a way for public sector agencies and watchdogs to tackle this issue more systematically in future.

A further question relates to changes in the external environment that may be critical to ad-

vancing public sector collaboration. One possible driver of change could be technology-based innovation. It has been stated that "[t]ruly new ideas cut across our silos" and that "[t]he citizen's view and experience of government is not siloed, and nor will the solutions to their needs be. Silos are becoming less important, while integration and collaboration are becoming more so" (Beauchamp 2015). These comments point to pressures and potentially disruptive changes that demand rapid progress and change in relation to collaboration for the public sector to remain relevant and effective.

The watchdog reports reviewed rarely addressed specifically how digital technologies have affected collaboration. An example of where this is addressed is the brief mention of progress of a trial with partner agencies of a child protection e-reporting system, with an increase in the number of e-reports associated with an expansion of the trial (NSW Ombudsman 2014). This is an area that could be considered more frequently in future investigations as it may help explain changes that have been observed as well as opportunities to improve collaboration going forward. Some watchdogs have already looked closely at the planning and implementation of Government 2.0 initiatives (see for example Auditor-General New Zealand 2013 and Victorian Auditor-General 2015), so for them it will be readily possible to look at how they are affecting collaboration.

It will also be relevant for watchdogs to remain agile in recognising and responding to changes of these kinds. Their capacity to do so is illustrated by comments made by the New Zealand Auditor-General that "[i]nnovation by its nature cannot be a 'paint by numbers' exercise" (Auditor-General New Zealand 2015: 3). She supported the flexible approach taken by a Ministry to setting up and managing partnerships with industry and argued that when forming new partnerships it is important to foster trust and appropriately manage risk rather than rigidly keep to a set formula.

Conclusion

Watchdog reports provide important insights into the problems encountered by public

sector agencies when seeking to collaborate with each other and third parties. Our analysis of 112 reports shows that problems that have been known for many years continue to constrain public sector effectiveness. Reviewing the findings in the context of public administration research raises questions about the benefit of continuing existing approaches such as introducing responsibilities under legislation and policy decisions, the provision of information and guidance and strengthening third-party oversight. We conclude that organisational capacity for collaboration warrants greater attention and that more systematic approaches are required. Changes in the external environment may place new pressures to collaborate on public sector agencies, indicating the need to pursue innovation in the design and implementation of collaboration arrangements.

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Queries

Journal: AUPA
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During the copy-editing of your paper, the following queries arose. Please respond to these by marking up your proofs with the necessary changes/additions. Please write your answers clearly on the query sheet if there is insufficient space on the page proofs. If returning the proof by fax do not write too close to the paper's edge. Please remember that illegible mark-ups may delay publication.

Query No.	Description	Remarks
Q1	Author: Please confirm that given names (red) and surnames/family names (green) have been identified correctly.	
Q2	Author: "O'Flynn (2014)" has been changed to "O'Flynn et al. (2014)" throughout the text to match the Ref. List. Please check for correctness.	

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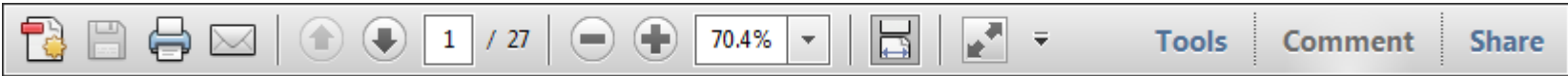
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Leave unchanged	... under matter to remain	①
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Change to italics	— under matter to be changed	↵
Change to capitals	≡ under matter to be changed	≡
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Change to lower case	Encircle matter to be changed	⊖
Change italic to upright type	(As above)	⏟
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Insert full stop	(As above)	⊙
Insert comma	(As above)	,
Insert single quotation marks	(As above)	⏟ or ⏟ and/or ⏟ or ⏟
Insert double quotation marks	(As above)	⏟ or ⏟ and/or ⏟ or ⏟
Insert hyphen	(As above)	⏟
Start new paragraph	⏟	⏟
No new paragraph	⏟	⏟
Transpose	⏟	⏟
Close up	linking ○ characters	○
Insert or substitute space between characters or words	/ through character or ⏟ where required	⏟
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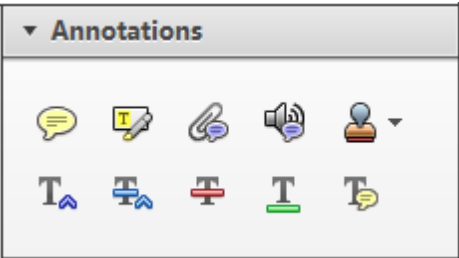
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Once you have Acrobat Reader open on your computer, click on the [Comment](#) tab at the right of the toolbar:



This will open up a panel down the right side of the document. The majority of tools you will use for annotating your proof will be in the [Annotations](#) section, pictured opposite. We've picked out some of these tools below:



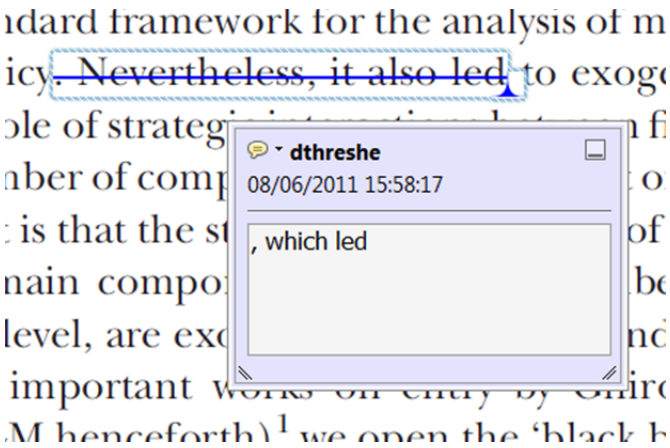
1. [Replace \(Ins\)](#) Tool – for replacing text.



Strikes a line through text and opens up a text box where replacement text can be entered.

How to use it

- Highlight a word or sentence.
- Click on the [Replace \(Ins\)](#) icon in the Annotations section.
- Type the replacement text into the blue box that appears.



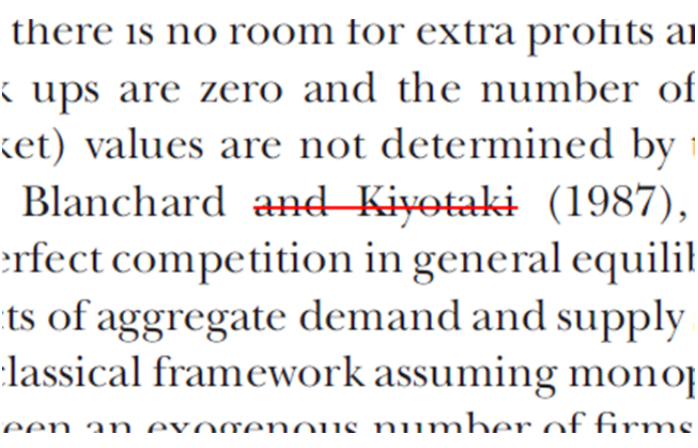
2. [Strikethrough \(Del\)](#) Tool – for deleting text.



Strikes a red line through text that is to be deleted.

How to use it

- Highlight a word or sentence.
- Click on the [Strikethrough \(Del\)](#) icon in the Annotations section.



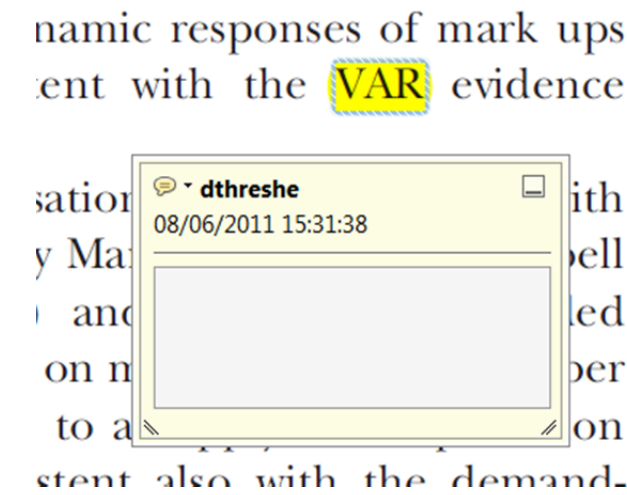
3. [Add note to text](#) Tool – for highlighting a section to be changed to bold or italic.



Highlights text in yellow and opens up a text box where comments can be entered.

How to use it

- Highlight the relevant section of text.
- Click on the [Add note to text](#) icon in the Annotations section.
- Type instruction on what should be changed regarding the text into the yellow box that appears.



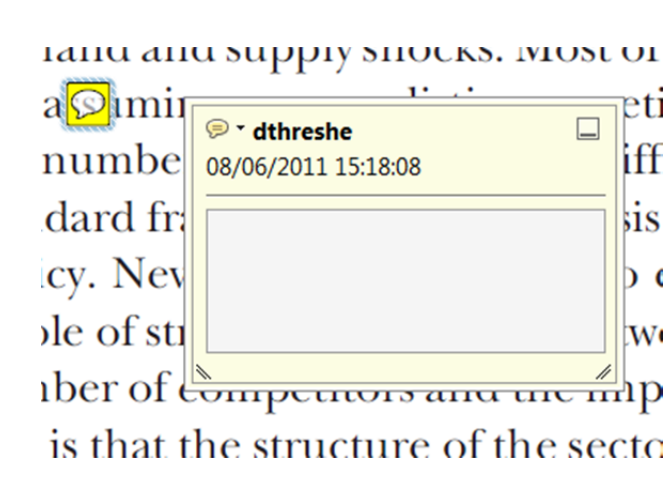
4. [Add sticky note](#) Tool – for making notes at specific points in the text.



Marks a point in the proof where a comment needs to be highlighted.


How to use it

- Click on the [Add sticky note](#) icon in the Annotations section.
- Click at the point in the proof where the comment should be inserted.
- Type the comment into the yellow box that appears.



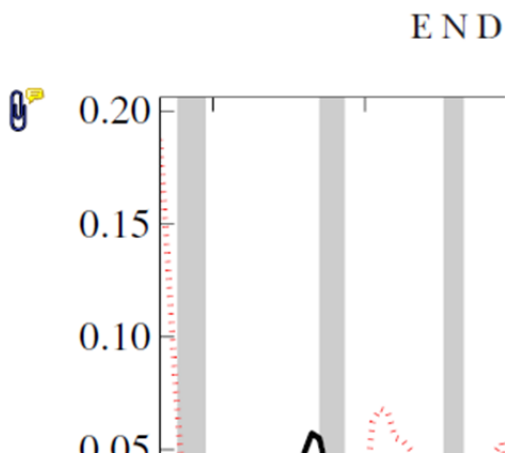
USING e-ANNOTATION TOOLS FOR ELECTRONIC PROOF CORRECTION

5. **Attach File** Tool – for inserting large amounts of text or replacement figures.


 Inserts an icon linking to the attached file in the appropriate place in the text.

How to use it

- Click on the **Attach File** icon in the Annotations section.
- Click on the proof to where you'd like the attached file to be linked.
- Select the file to be attached from your computer or network.
- Select the colour and type of icon that will appear in the proof. Click OK.



6. **Add stamp** Tool – for approving a proof if no corrections are required.

 Inserts a selected stamp onto an appropriate place in the proof.

How to use it

- Click on the **Add stamp** icon in the Annotations section.
- Select the stamp you want to use. (The **Approved** stamp is usually available directly in the menu that appears).
- Click on the proof where you'd like the stamp to appear. (Where a proof is to be approved as it is, this would normally be on the first page).

of the business cycle, starting with the
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Drawing Markups

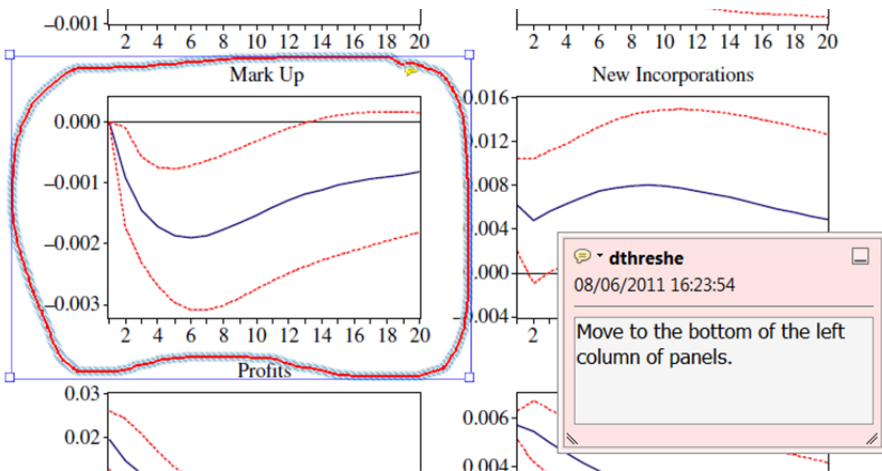


How to use it

- Click on one of the shapes in the **Drawing Markups** section.
- Click on the proof at the relevant point and draw the selected shape with the cursor.
- To add a comment to the drawn shape, move the cursor over the shape until an arrowhead appears.
- Double click on the shape and type any text in the red box that appears.

7. **Drawing Markups** Tools – for drawing shapes, lines and freeform annotations on proofs and commenting on these marks.

Allows shapes, lines and freeform annotations to be drawn on proofs and for comment to be made on these marks..



For further information on how to annotate proofs, click on the **Help** menu to reveal a list of further options:

