

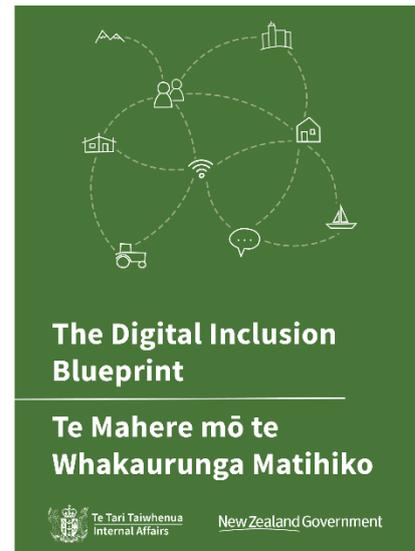
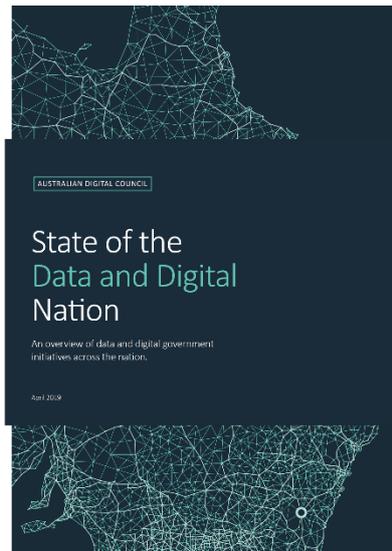
APO Digital Inclusion Collection Brief: May 2019

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Welcome to the second APO Digital Inclusion Snapshot. These monthly snapshots introduce some of the latest offerings from academic, government and non-government sources available in the APO Digital Inclusion Collection.

This month the snapshot examines three recent reports. Two of these survey digital transformation strategies and initiatives of Australia's federal and state and territory governments: (1) the Parliamentary Library's *Public Sector Digital Transformation: A Quick Guide*; and (2) the Australian Digital Council's *State of the Data and Digital Nation*. These reports highlight the substantial investment Australian governments are making in the process of transitioning to digital service provision and data-driven government. However, they also reveal that the digital transformation agenda has primarily focussed on supply-side digital solutions, with limited attention to addressing the demand-side impediments associated with digital exclusion that will influence who gets to enjoy the benefits of such a transformation. Across the ditch, the New Zealand Government has recently made a more explicit connection between digital transformation and digital inclusion through its *Digital Inclusion Blueprint*. This is the third document examined in this month's snapshot.

A similar Australian Blueprint might well prove useful in broadening the digital transformation agenda. There certainly seems to be an emerging local appetite for this type of thinking, with the Australian Digital Council recently acknowledging "the importance of ensuring no one is left behind in the digital transformation of public services" and agreeing "to continue to prioritise digital inclusion when agreeing future digital transformation initiatives" ([Communique, 5 April 2019](#)).

[Public Sector Digital Transformation: A Quick Guide](#)

The Research Branch of the [Parliamentary Library](#) produces a broad range of publications that provide authoritative and timely information, along with analysis of legislation and current issues relevant to public policy and administration. Outputs from the Parliamentary Library are highly regarded and commonly feature amongst the most viewed materials held by APO. Reports from the library's *Quick Guide* series act as an excellent primer and resource list on a vast array of topics, including everything from unemployment statistical measurement, to Australia's response to the Rohingya human rights and migrant crisis.

The *Public Sector Digital Transformation: A Quick Guide* posits a working definition of 'digital transformation' as a process that "enables services to be performed in completely new ways, or enables entirely new services to be devised and delivered". The guide acknowledges some debate about the extent to which the 'digital transformation' initiatives put forward by governments actually fall within this definition, and whether they may be better classified as digitisation or digitalisation. In any case, the report takes a broadly chronological approach in laying out recent developments related to Australian federal public sector digital transformation, beginning with the establishment of the Digital Transformation Office under the 2015-16 Budget.

The report provides insights into such developments as the Australian Government Digital Transformation Agenda, the Digital Records Transformation Initiative, the Digital Marketplace ICT procurement portal, and digital identity and cybersecurity frameworks. Tellingly, it makes no explicit reference to the barriers some members of the community are likely to face in engaging with a digitally-transformed public sector, and an examination of a range of the source documents linked to the report suggests that this issue of digital inclusion has not been a key feature of the Australian digital transformation agenda. This is also largely reflected in the second report featured in this month's review—the Australian Digital Council's *State of the Data and Digital Nation*.

[State of the Data and Digital Nation](#)

As outlined in the Parliamentary Library's *Public Sector Digital Transformation: A Quick Guide*, the Australian Digital Council is a ministerial council seeking to 'establish proposals for better cross-government collaboration on data and digital transformation to drive smarter service delivery and improved policy outcomes'. The Australian Digital Council's *State of the Data and Digital Nation* report provides an overview of the main data and digital transformation initiatives of Commonwealth and State and Territory governments. The report identifies eighty-nine such initiatives, grouped under six key themes: policy and strategy, user experience, products and services, service enablers, internal capabilities, and data sharing and linking. It provides a short overview of a selection of highlighted initiatives under each of the themes.

The breadth of digital transformation work being conducted by Australian governments is evident from the report. Most of the programs and strategies highlighted represent what might be described as digital solutions. These solutions include integrated digital records management systems, data management and analytics systems for data-driven government, end-to-end online customer processing, customer relationship management systems, digital identity management tools (such as digital drivers licences), and open source and open design digital government platforms. The three digital inclusion initiatives featured in the report relate to investment in infrastructure to facilitate connectivity (the 'WA Regional Telecommunications Project' and NT Centre for Appropriate Technology mobile signal amplification rollout) and enhancing digital skills (the Tasmanian Government's 'Digital Ready for Daily life' program).

Under the policy and strategy theme, the NT's Digital Territory Strategy is an approach that incorporates digital inclusion. Nevertheless, addressing digital inclusion is noticeably absent from the national digital transformation framework.

[Digital Inclusion Blueprint, Te Mahere mō te Whakaurunga Matihiko](#)

In April 2019, the New Zealand Government released the *Digital Inclusion Blueprint*. The Blueprint sets out the vision and context for digital inclusion in New Zealand, outlines the role of government in the advancement of digital inclusion, and sets out a timeline for action.

The Blueprint identifies four interdependent elements needed for a person to be digitally included: motivation, access, skills and trust. It recognises that directly addressing these elements is only part of the challenge, since a number of factors, such as geography, socio-economic status, cultural bias and low literacy, can undermine the four elements.

To advance digital inclusion, the Blueprint calls for a coordinated effort from government, community and commercial agencies and entities. The role of the central government in digital inclusion is clearly outlined. It is divided into four parts: to lead (by both setting out a strategy and leading by example in ensuring its own digital content is accessible and online services can be used by everyone); to connect (by making links between people, funders, initiatives and communities both inside and outside government); to support (through investment); and to deliver (through providing services that directly address digital inclusion).

It is clear from the Blueprint that digital inclusion is considered fundamental to the New Zealand government's digital transformation agenda. Indeed, the government's Chief Digital Officer, Paul James, is not only responsible for "leading digital transformation across government", but also for the "government's digital inclusion work program" as outlined in the Blueprint (p.5; p.7). In his foreword to the Blueprint, James outlines his commitment to an inclusive approach to digital transformation: "I am committed to working with my colleagues across the public sector to ensure everyone can access and use the online information, services and products we produce. This means applying existing standards to ensure content on government websites is accessible. It also means thinking about the people who aren't already online by reducing barriers to access and providing alternative offline channels where we can" (p.5).

The [APO Digital Inclusion Collection](#) features reports, commentary and other grey literature related to digital inclusion in Australia and internationally. The collection is supported by the Centre for Social Impact at Swinburne University.

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