



DELVING INTO DATA

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT GRADUATE DATA NETWORK'S ANNUAL DATA FORUM

15 MARCH 2022

TRANSCRIPT OF EVENT

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

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DAVID PATTIE:

We might do a little bit of audience participation now just to get you going. And the first question we wanted to ask is what is your experience of using data in government? It is great to see so many of you comfortable with the data that you have. That's excellent. And a whole bunch of you really keen to learn about the possibilities.

Why are you attending this forum? I'm not sure if free and food went together, but they came up very quickly.

HESHAN INAMALUWA:

Through our data initiatives, such as this forum, we aim to drive better policy program and service delivery outcomes across the APS for the benefit of all Australians.

GORDON DE BROUWER:

What's the purpose or objective that you're trying to achieve in this work around data? What's it really all about? Purpose? The what. Really, what are you trying to achieve? Keep your eye on the prize. Purpose is the prize. Data matters for evidence. Data matters for honesty. Data matters for the policy advice, the programme implementation and the service delivery that you variously work on.

And that underpins how you achieve the best results for the Australian community and for the government that the law asks of you. So it's not something we've made up. This is what the parliament has asked you to do in your job. The importance of collaboration and focusing on outcomes is made greater by the power of digital technology and data. One of the most profound things that I've seen in my life and how those have changed. More and more of the data that we now have is more closely

available in real time, rather than a picture of the distant past. You can see what's, almost pretty much what's happening in the world now rather than what happened 3, 6, 12 months ago. And it's often closer to a census rather than a sample. You're seeing everything around people's lives rather than just a sample of it.

HON STUART ROBERT MP

There has never been a better time to be in the data space as a professional. Everyone else has now caught up to what we have always known, the data rules the world. And it becoming more and more so as we progress. We've got a goal of course, to be one of the top three digital economies by 2030. And of course, the government's digital strategy requires all services delivered by government to be online by 2025, there is an extraordinary data journey ahead of us.

GAYLE MILNES:

So here in the Australian government, we are the custodians of our most valuable national asset. And that's our data. We're surrounded by talented people making great use of that data. Haven't we seen through the COVID pandemic, the value of data? It's just such an amazing example of what can be done with data and the value of it to us all.

We could see from the data where the higher levels of immunisation was, and we were able to then target or shift our resources, make sure the services available in the areas needed to bolster and lift the vaccination rates in areas of the community that were lagging. To get that picture, we have to work together right across the Australian government, but by doing that, we can bring all these amazing data sets together. And that's where it really comes into play to serve, to help us understand the problems and work towards the solutions and in the path of that, providing opportunities for Australians.

DAVID GRUEN:

Delving into data used, used to be almost exclusively, the domain of statisticians, accountants, economists and researchers. These days, and increasingly, most roles in the public service will require some level of data literacy. And the data profession will play a major role here. When talking about data skills, many people immediately think of data analysis and of course data analysis is important, but the framework lists many data capability areas, including data management, data collection, data governance, data classification, data communication, and visualisation. And you can use it to assess your level of proficiency and identify what you need to do to lift your data capability and further your career.

It's worth reflecting that not so long ago, we couldn't do these things because there was much less sharing of data between agencies, the supply of data was more limited because digital platforms had not reached a level of maturity that enabled the generation of large quantities of data. And we didn't have the required technology like cloud storage. So we've come a long way, but we can do a lot more if we continue to lift data capability across the APS. And the passage of the Data Availability and Transparency Bill is also an important element on the journey.

As the data landscape around us continues to evolve and grow, there may never have been a more exciting time to have the privilege of working with data. There's a great breadth of data available to explore in the APS and you can do really interesting and important work with it. And remember there are many different data roles you can try.

An important aspect of all these data initiatives is collaboration, not only across the APS, but also with states and territories, universities and the private sector. No single agency could make the sort of progress we've made on its own. So my advice is start building relationships with your peers today, people in your agencies and departments, people across the public sector and other sectors and listen and learn from them. It's those relationships that will make data projects successful, ensuring the APS can provide relevant, timely, and impartial information to inform Australia's important decisions. Thank you.