

The Evidence in Plain Sight: Drivers Impelling Agencies to Digitise

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Foreword



I'd like to thank Intermedium for the opportunity to sponsor this paper capturing the digital imperative for the public sector, which has been made acute by the unprecedented speed, scale and flexibility challenges of COVID-19. The drivers identified in this paper echo the feedback we are hearing from the experiences of our government customers. Salesforce is delighted to partner with both Intermedium and Government as we work towards further empowering the Australian public service to address the policy and service delivery challenges of the 'new normal'.



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Introduction

2020 is the year most of us would like to forget. Prolonged drought, horrific bushfires and floods followed by the outbreak of COVID-19 has led to estimates¹ that the [total level of debt under the Coalition Government will surpass \\$1 trillion¹](#), creating an enduring deficit situation that will have implications for Federal and State agency administrative funding for years to come.

The collective impact of this rolling wave of disasters has caused all Australian jurisdictions to rethink their business models, particularly with regard to services to citizens and businesses. The terms 'pivot' and 'agility' are now firmly embedded in the dialogue regarding the imagined post COVID-19 'new normal'. Front and centre of that pivot is the heightened emphasis on the digitisation of services to not only citizens, but also now to businesses.

"The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us of the increasing reliance we have on technology in our day-to-day lives. In the first 6 months of 2020, more people than ever have turned to government digital services..."

[Australian Data and Digital Council, September 2020, [State of the Data and Digital Nation](#)]

Agencies exercise a great deal of autonomy in their administrative decisions, including over their technology directions and investments under Australia's Westminster system of government and over the last decade there has been growing Whole-of-Government (WofG) encouragement and enablement for agencies to digitise their services.

The Federal government, NSW and South Australia have provided significant budget funding for the digital transformation of services since COVID-19.

As at 13 November 2020, other jurisdictions are either yet to bring down their delayed 2020-21 Budgets or have not placed an emphasis on digital transformation.

FUNDED DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND RELATED INITIATIVES

SAUD MILLION	NZ	Federal	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT
2020-21 Budget	217	1,195				0	120			
2020-21 non-Budget		1,670	1,600							
2019-20 Budget	N/A	238	206	47	119	118	27	91	20	0

All figures in \$AUD millions

N/A for NZ in 2019-20 - Budget initiative collation by Intermedium not undertaken

Blank field indicates collation still underway (NSW, NT & Tas) or Budget yet to be brought down (Qld, Vic & ACT)

○ For Cyber Security

○ Specifically entitled 'Digital Restart Fund'

Despite such WofG activity, most agency business systems are still either in a legacy state or rely fully or in part on manual procedures and their digitisation priority remains largely in the hands of agency-level decision makers.

Intermedium has monitored the rate at which jurisdictions have put in place the necessary enablers to allow their agencies to proceed with digital transformation and reports on this on a yearly basis in its [Digital Government Readiness Indicator](#)².

It also monitors digitisation progress through ongoing research and dialogue (on and off the record) at Ministerial and senior government level including in its **GovInterConnect**³ program of webinars and podcasts and has identified a number of drivers that will put increasing pressure on government and agency decision makers to elevate the priority accorded to the digitisation of their business systems.

Drivers Impelling Agencies to Digitise:

- 01 [The increasing expectations of citizens for seamless services](#)
- 02 [The implementation of citizen life journey solutions](#)
- 03 [The institutionalisation of lessons from COVID-19](#)
- 04 [Rationalisation of systems to WofG cloud platforms](#)
- 05 [Investment in a digitally led economic recovery](#)
- 06 [The persistence of new work models](#)
- 07 [Data driven policy as a must-have](#)



01 The ever-increasing expectations of citizens for seamless services

Citizens are becoming more demanding when it comes to online government services. Life is too short to waste time wrangling with a poorly designed website or being shunted from department to department in the search for a product or service that should be easy to find.


“...what is the future of service delivery? Well, imagine a world where interacting with government is as seamless and intuitive as using your iPhone... Imagine being given more and more opportunity to easily and quickly provide your feedback and where your feedback is being acted on in real-time to innovate and improve the services...”

[NSW Minister for Customer Service Victor Dominello, August 2019, [The evolution of service delivery](#)]

As citizen-centric or business-centric solutions are increasingly implemented by digitally advanced jurisdictions such as the Federal and NSW Governments, the evidence of ‘what is possible’ will only further ratchet up citizen expectations and throw the spotlight on laggard agencies.

In addition, many citizens have experienced new digitised services rolled out rapidly as the result of the impacts of COVID-19 predominantly, but also in the context of bushfire, drought and flood relief support.

Australia’s 19th and 20th century ‘[rail gauge](#)’ problem is fading from memory but for an extended period of time multiple stakeholders could not agree on the width of rail gauge to lay down in the then colonies. This led to a situation where freight and passenger trains could not continue beyond state borders because the track changed width. This created ongoing and unnecessary freight and passenger costs and delays for almost a century.



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A digital equivalent will arise if jurisdictions do not move at roughly equivalent speed to resolve major trans-jurisdictional aspects of digitised services to citizens and businesses, such as digital licences and digital identity.

Digital driver's licences have been implemented thus far only in NSW, SA and Queensland, giving rise to the potential problems in the degree of recognition that a digital licence currently has as a valid instrument in a non-digital licence jurisdiction. 'Take your old plastic licence' was the advice of a NSW official, when questioned about the likelihood of a Northern Territory policeman recognising a NSW digital driver's licence.

Standing up a coherent digital identity solution is an essential lynchpin for successful digital transformation and the Ministerial cross-jurisdictional forum, the Australian Data and Digital Council (ADDC) has recommitted to interjurisdictional collaboration to ensure a "consistent approach" towards the Digital Identity platform.

DIGITAL LICENCE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

Jurisdiction	Status
NSW	All Licences
QLD	Learner's Licence and 2 others
SA	Driver's Licence and 3 others
VIC	Fishing Licence
WA	Not Implemented
ACT	Not Implemented
TAS	Not Implemented
NT	Not Implemented

02 The implementation of citizen life journey solutions

A life journey mapping approach adopts user experience (UX) and human-centred design principles to identify key points where interaction with multiple agencies currently occurs for a single citizen life event (such as the birth of a child) and seeks to streamline this into one simple interaction. Such measures are vital to rebuilding citizen trust as poor experience of government services is a key factor in the erosion of citizen trust.

Without such life journey mapping approaches often confusing, multiple journeys through sometimes multiple government agencies will continue to occur. Due to their complexity these journeys are inefficient (too slow and often inaccurate), ineffective (don't meet the citizen's specific need) and therefore frustrating from the citizen's perspective.

The [Trust Imperative Report](#)⁴, a collaborative research paper from Boston Consulting Group and Salesforce, found that 85 per cent of people said their more recent customer experiences with government agencies affected their level of trust and confidence in government.

Three ADDC-supported journey maps are at various stages of development with different jurisdictions taking the lead role for each

Jurisdiction

ACT
NSW
QLD


Life Journey

Birth of a Child
End of life
Looking for work

Status

Pilot
Roll-out
Planning

The 'birth of a child' life journey pilot involves the development and trial of a process that 'joins up' birth registrations, Medicare enrolments and Centrelink payments for newborns.



Life journey mapping measures are vital to rebuilding citizen trust as poor experience of government services is a key factor in the erosion of citizen trust.

The Prime Minister and state Premiers, via the the ADDC, have committed to working together on 'citizen life journey' projects through inter-agency and inter-jurisdictional collaboration⁵.

"Understanding life events allows governments to orient services around people's needs, rather than how government is organised. Across Australia and globally, governments are starting to adopt life event based design approaches to delivery better, user centred services."

[Australian Data and Digital Council, September 2020, [State of the Data and Digital Nation](#)]

Importantly, the ADDC expects 'birth of a child' journey map to offer insights into the viability of developing a national digital birth certificate.

"Our Vision is for people and businesses to access Government services as easily as they can and with as little intervention as possible, just like when you do online shopping, banking, or booking a holiday."

[The Hon Stuart Robert MP, [Government Services in the digital age: the challenges, the plan and the delivery](#)]

03 The institutionalisation of lessons from COVID-19

Globally, the Australian Government is viewed as a role model for its rapid and efficacious response to COVID-19.

Australia [sits at number 5](#)⁶ in global digital government transformation rankings⁸ and there are now many examples of the speed, flexibility and innovation of digital COVID-19 responses implemented across the public sector.

Services Australia, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Taxation Office, among many, have been lauded for galvanising human and technological resources in record time to address the major and immediate issues generated by the pandemic.

Earlier digitisation and automation investments allowed such agencies to rapidly scale to meet the unprecedented levels of demand. Rapid deployment of cloud-based platforms solutions, particularly Platform as a Service (PaaS) and Software as a Service (SaaS) was also an underlying common element of their COVID 19 response success.

In stark contrast to such success stories, at the height of the pandemic's second wave in Victoria in June and July 2020, a reliance on 'old and antiquated systems relying on pen and paper' led to contact tracing, in some instances, taking up to two weeks⁷.

Services Australia's 'platform + agile' approach to COVID 19

- Features a seamless online step-by-step guide to create a Centrelink account
- Includes a video and translated text options in more than 70 languages that catered to the huge surge in demand for services at the outset of the pandemic
- The 'If you need a payment' portal links to other relevant services and supplies a contact phone number
- Demonstrates the agile implementation of reusable components (micro services) by in-house teams
- Is hosted in a Platform as a Service (PaaS) environment to allow for rapid application development⁸

Rapid deployment of cloud-based platform solutions, particularly Platform as a Service (PaaS) and Software as a Service (SaaS) was an underlying common element of COVID 19 response success.



The experience of COVID 19 also brought home the value of an agile (implement rapidly, iterate many times) methodology in the development of the apps that were so urgently needed as part of the response. Such developments were often created using PaaS or SaaS as a basis and have significantly reinforced to decision makers and funders the value of proceeding on the cloud journey.

All jurisdictions have a 'cloud first' policy, but some, such as NSW's public cloud policy⁹ which mandates "all NSW Government agencies using public cloud, for a minimum of 25% of their ICT services, by 2023" break new ground that will likely be emulated by other jurisdictions.

04 The rationalisation of systems to WofG (cloud) platforms

The ADDC has reaffirmed its commitment to the use of platforms across jurisdictions. In the context of COVID-19, the Council's 2 April 2020 communiqué stressed the need to “ramp up digital service delivery, create platforms for real-time information and support vulnerable citizens are shared priorities”¹⁰. In its State of the Data and Digital Nation 2020 report, it lists the platform initiatives underway in each member jurisdiction.

The ADDC's 2020 roll-call of current platform-based services

Jurisdiction	Service
Federal	COVIDsafe
NSW	buy.nsw
VIC	Service Vic, Engage Vic, Single Digital Platform
QLD	Unify Program, QHub, Residential Tenancies Authority Digital Forms
WA	Environment Online
SA	Common Digital Forms
ACT	Digital Account
NT	Health Services Clinical Solution
TAS	None listed

Breaking new ground: NSW mandates that all its agencies will use public cloud for no less than 25% of ICT services by 2023.

WofG digital platforms are being incorporated into many of the stimulus responses to the economic downturn with the Digital Transformation Agency's (DTA's) 2018 [Digital Service Platforms Strategy](#) laying the groundwork in its WofG platform roadmap for Digital Identity, 'Tell Us Once', 'Inbox', 'Notifications' and 'Payments In'¹¹.

A reusable WofG digital platform for 'Permissions Capability' has been issued as a 'Request for Information' (RFI) by the Department of Home Affairs.



An ageing population, rising citizen expectations and COVID-19 related revenue challenges have placed significant pressure on government funding, in turn putting pressure on agency operational expenditure for years to come

The RFI says this platform is expected to provide services for permits, accreditations, licences and registrations and is envisaged to be used by many agencies in many permission-granting contexts such as security clearances, export/import permits and police checks.’

An ageing population, rising citizen expectations and COVID-19 related revenue challenges have placed significant pressure on government funding, in turn putting pressure on agency operational expenditure for years to come.

Key targets for cost reduction will continue to be the elimination of low intrinsic job value, back office operations and providing the technology enablement to allow staff to spend more time in the field.

The automation of manual processes with low intrinsic value for either management or staff through the implementation of platform solutions with the capacity to configure (as opposed to customise or code) will remain a major priority.

So too will the increased provision of mobile devices to frontline workers such as social workers or emergency personnel, together with the apps that give them access to real time information and allow them to document the outcomes of their work throughout the day.

In summary, agencies would be well placed to prioritise their systems’ digitisation journey, given all jurisdictions will be looking to cut their expenditure wherever possible, and given that any new funding likely to be allocated will be off the back of business cases that make a strong argument for the modernisation of legacy systems, the automation of manual procedures and significantly enhanced services to citizens.

“This build/buy once, reuse many times approach will reduce duplication of ICT investment and address the current risks and costs of ageing, siloed systems—saving a significant amount of taxpayers’ money while simultaneously improving government service delivery performance.”

The Hon Stuart Robert, Minister for Government Services, 2020, [Media release: Preparing Australia for reopening to the world: a smarter, easier, more secure national border](#)

05 Investment in a digitally led economic recovery

As the delayed 2020-21 Budgets start to come down, it is apparent that key jurisdictions expect agencies to contribute to economic recovery via the digitisation of their services.

In his 29 September 2020 media statement, Prime Minister Scott Morrison made it patently clear that digitisation was the way forward for Australia as he endorsed a plan to establish a “fully digital economy” across the nation by 2030¹².

“Our Digital Infrastructure package is estimated to increase Australia’s GDP by \$6.4 billion a year by 2024 and around \$1.5 billion of this additional economic activity is estimated to flow to regional Australia each year.”

[Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, 29 Sep 2020, [Digital Business Plan To Drive Australia’s Economic Recovery](#)]

Business registries as a digital platform

- A dramatic acceleration of digitisation by the government to stimulate business growth with national implications for the new digital economy
- \$419.1 million for the consolidation of 30-plus business Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) registers
- The removal of out-dated regulations
- Indication that the digitisation agenda is no longer about citizen-centric services but also about business-centric services
- Is in line with the Federal digital goal to move “all services online by 2025”¹³



As a part of this economic recovery plan, the Federal government has committed \$800 million to increase the business uptake of digital technologies.

Most of the funding will go towards reinvigoration or finalisation of key government platforms. These include business registers and the federated myGovID identity system which is a key part of the government's digital transformation agenda.

The pressure will be on agencies to determine how and where they place their digitisation effort in terms of linking to these major platforms as they come on stream over the next two to three years.

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06 The persistence of new work models

COVID-19 necessitated a rapid pivot to work from home arrangements. The ensuing levels of worker satisfaction and productivity indicates that agencies will find it difficult to revert to arrangements where staff are 100 per cent office based. Estimates are that approximately 30 per cent of staff will be working from home at any point in time in the future.

"The pandemic forced employers' hands and potentially normalised working from home – now and into the future. By the end of May 2020, 57% of APS employees were reportedly working from home. By August 2020, almost two-thirds of APS employees were working from home."

[Associate Professor Linda Colley, CQUniversity, Dr Sue Williamson, UNSW Canberra, [Working during the Pandemic: From Resistance to Revolution?](#)]

Agency work from home checklist

- ✓ Resolve video conferencing and secure networking arrangements
- ✓ Consider cloud solutions for rapid implementation of new capability
- ✓ Ensure staff have the right (eg mobile) technology and can access business systems
- ✓ Implement apps to support the new arrangements (eg logging work hours)
- ✓ Ensure appropriate cyber resilience measures are in place
- ✓ Implement collaboration platforms

Estimates are that approximately 30 per cent of staff will be working from home at any point in time in the future.



"As we start the transition back to our usual places of work... it will be crucial that we don't back into the old patterns of working... We have learnt much – the value of flexibility and mobility. The importance of collaboration... [and] the value of thinking as one enterprise and utilising data..."

[Peter Woolcott, Australian Public Service Commissioner, Australian [Public Sector Innovation Show: Strategy and Innovation Stream, 10 June 2020](#)]

To the degree that remote working becomes an institutionalised feature of the public sector, it will create requirements for agencies to consolidate and normalise the procedures and measures that were rapidly instituted in the early lockdown phase of COVID-19, creating a key opportunity to implement digitised platform solutions as an investment into the future.

07 Data driven policy development as a 'must have'

The agencies at the forefront of the health and economic stimulus responses have showcased to Ministerial and senior levels of government what sophisticated use of data analytics can do.

Policy developed from the valid interpretation of accurate data is the holy grail of government.

The agencies at the forefront of the health and economic stimulus responses have showcased to Ministerial and senior levels of government what sophisticated use of data analytics can do. For example, the agile use of data modelling in NSW throughout the COVID-19 pandemic allowed authorities to make decisions to reopen certain sectors of industry and society to minimise social, health and economic harm. The ongoing success of such life-saving initiatives has been noted across the country.

"Data analytics offers new ways to improve government policy and service design, accurately model future programs, and save significant time and money."

[Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2018, [A Data Reform Strategy for the Victorian Public Service Better Decisions Underpinned by Data](#)]

The NSW Data Analytics Centre (DAC) has set a high bar for "agile delivery"¹⁴. During the pandemic, the DAC has continuously published data about NSW COVID-19 cases and tests to its Data.NSW platform. This transparent sharing of real-time data has been seen to help increase public confidence in government, allow agencies and other stakeholders to determine steps that need to be taken to mitigate potential negative outcomes and help identify the most urgent pandemic management priorities.

In April 2020, the NSW government launched an automated SMS result notification service, which reduced the waiting time for results from a week to within 24 hours of testing.

Case study: NSW Health Pathology

‘Test, test, test’ is a key message from health experts to help slow the spread of COVID-19. However, the high rate of testing in early 2020 meant that patients would often need to wait a week or more before their results were returned.

In April 2020, the NSW Government launched an automated SMS result notification service, which reduced the waiting time for results from a week to within 24 hours of testing.

Staff no longer had to manually contact patients and could therefore be redirected, and health workers waiting for test results were able to emerge from quarantine and get back to work sooner. The faster response also alleviated patient anxiety¹⁵.

Apart from its recognised potential to assist in the formulating of policy responses, data has the potential to offer a far deeper understanding of the citizen as an individual and allow for the personalisation of an otherwise ‘standardised’ service, a particularly important consideration if life journey mapping is to deliver maximum benefits.

“Data has intrinsic economic and social value, often in ways not foreseen by those that collect it. With appropriate consideration of commercial, privacy and security sensitivities, there is mounting evidence indicating that the public release of government-held data, in easily shared and readable formats, can fuel business activity, increase public sector efficiency, and provide better support for evidence-based policy development.”

[The Australian Government Open Data Toolkit¹⁶.]

Conclusion



Jurisdictions which have not yet backed WofG digital transformation will need to determine what strategies they can adopt to avoid a situation where their citizens fall on the wrong side of a 'digital divide' that privileges some Australians with speedy, accurate and personalised services and others not.

The events of 2020 have laid to rest the notion that digital transformation is a 'nice to have'.

As evident in this research, the drivers impelling all agencies towards a digitised and platform-based future ubiquitously apply at State and Federal levels of government and seem destined to become even stronger into the future.

The relevance of digitisation of both front line, service delivery functions and back office administrative functions is hitting home at the Ministerial level of government in an unprecedented way, not only because of the work and focus of the Australian Data and Digital Council, but also because of the evident degree to which agencies relying on manual administrative procedures struggled to cope with the impacts of COVID-19, while those which had made investments into digitally transformed, cloud-based systems were able to rapidly meet enormous spikes in service demand and introduce new services and response measures.

A number of jurisdictions have comprehensively backed digital transformation at the WofG level with significant Budget funding either in 2020-21, the previous Budget year or as special funding announcements. Those which have not yet done so will need to determine what strategies they can adopt to avoid a situation where their citizens fall on the wrong side of a 'digital divide' that privileges some Australians with speedy, accurate and personalised services and others not.

The emergence of pan-jurisdictional platforms, such as those that come forward under the federated Digital Identity framework will help mitigate the digital divide risk, but each jurisdiction will have to be clear-eyed about what is done at this level, versus what they need to do within their own border to provide the services their citizens will have every right to expect, based on what they see is available in the digitally-forward jurisdictions.

Individual agencies have their part to play also, by ensuring that their increasingly constrained allocations of operational expenditure are invested to best effect. The digitisation and automation of systems that free agency resources to focus on the activities that allow their respective jurisdictions to optimally manage their post-COVID 19 'new normal' would have to be one of the key candidates for future investment.

About Salesforce



Salesforce helps government bodies build trust by assisting departments to personalise their service delivery with a single, 360 degree view of the customer. From grants management to complex case management and life journeys, we have assisted a growing number of government agencies to structure their people and processes around the customer. Government CRM solutions from Salesforce are revolutionising the capabilities of the public sector just as they have in the private sector. Today's most innovative governments are adopting the service models of business, viewing their citizens as customers.

Salesforce is the global leader in customer relationship management (CRM), bringing companies closer to their customers in the digital age. Founded in 1999, Salesforce enables companies of every size and industry to take advantage of powerful technologies – cloud, mobile, social, Internet of Things, and Artificial Intelligence – to connect to their customers in a whole new way. The Salesforce Customer 360 includes industry-leading services spanning sales, service, marketing, commerce, communities, collaboration and industries, all on a single trusted cloud platform. The company is ranked #1 on Fortune's World's Best Workplaces list, and Forbes has ranked the company one of the world's most innovative companies for eight years in a row. For more information, please visit www.salesforce.com/au/gov.

About Intermedium

[Intermedium](#) researches, analyses and advises upon Australian and New Zealand public sector use of information and communications technology (ICT). Established in 2004 and headquartered in Sydney, Intermedium has a strong focus on digital transformation and public sector adoption of emerging technologies and values its reputation for providing independent, objective and informed analysis. Both public and private sector clients utilise its innovative range of subscription products, consulting and research services.

Intermedium provides the GovInterConnect platform to members of the public sector to support knowledge sharing about contemporary digital transformation and ICT trends. It makes its Knowledge Base of research articles, webinars and podcasts available on a complimentary basis. [GovInterConnect](#) is available to anyone who registers for an account with a "gov.au" email address.

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