PUBLICSECTOR

AI AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR:
UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

BULLYING IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE:
INVESTIGATING THE REALITY AND OFFERING SOLUTIONS

Institute of
Public Administration
New Zealand

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**IPANZ PRESIDENT
LIZ MACPHERSON**

WITH CHANGE COMES OPPORTUNITY

As I write, government formation talks continue and the public service waits to know the exact shape of the incoming Government it will serve.

When we take stock at this time, what is it that we know?

We know that the performance and value of the public service will be under scrutiny. We also know that there will be a plethora of new ideas and policies to be implemented which will require considerable work, potentially with diminishing resources.

We know that New Zealand's public sector is highly regarded – that 82 percent of New Zealanders trust public services based on their personal experience. That trust in the public sector jumped up in time of crisis (COVID-19) to a 69 percent peak, from historical levels of around 50 percent or lower. But that this trust remains lower for Māori and disabled people (data from Kiwis Count survey).

We know that central and local government consumption has been growing at an increasing rate over the past 10 years. Achieving something like the projected flat-to-falling government consumption signalled in the Pre-Election Budget and Economic Fiscal Update will represent a significant challenge, let alone delivering on further cuts.

We know that despite increased government expenditure there remain areas of unmet need and service failure and that the social, economic, environmental, and geo-political context poses questions to which there are no easy answers.

We know that such challenges can only be met through clear, disciplined prioritisation. Across the board 'haircuts' are a blunt, poorly targeted tool. Making evidence-based decisions about what will be stopped (and really stopping them) and functions that will not be funded is necessary to resource real progress in critical areas. Such decisions are the role of government ministers. Clear ministerial priorities help public servants do their job – serving the public through the Government of the day.

We also know that our non-partisan public service wants to help the incoming Government get up to speed as quickly as possible, to assist them in the challenging decisions they will need to make, and that giving non-partisan free and frank advice can help achieve that. The advice provided needs to be mindful that the incoming Government has a mandate and set of policies it wants to implement.

We know that the coming year will be a test of agility for the public sector. That while there is much to be proud of, all is not perfect and there is scope for improvement. It is not a time to be defensive. Nor a time to hold onto ways of doing things that are not effective. Rather, change brings an opportunity to grapple with aspects of the state services which you have long wanted to improve and an opportunity to show the new Government (and the public that elected them) that the public service is ready and capable to explore new ways of delivering value.

AI AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR:
UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

In the first of a series of articles for *Public Sector* journal, Stephen Clarke, Data and Information Management Consultant and former Chief Archivist, provides an overview of the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies within the public sector, the impacts of AI on our work, and asks what issues AI raises for public servants.

AI is rapidly transforming the public sector globally, with the potential to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and public service delivery. However, it is important to understand the current AI landscape, including the existing applications, policy and regulatory frameworks, and potential issues, to maximise the benefits of this technology while mitigating the risks and challenges it raises.

STEPHEN CLARKE

Current applications of AI in the public sector

AI is already being used in a variety of ways across the New Zealand public sector, including:

- automating tasks, such as processing applications, issuing invoices, and responding to customer enquiries
- improving decision-making by analysing large amounts of data to identify patterns and insights
- personalising services: Chatbots provide support to users, and algorithms recommend relevant services to the individual.

These applications, for the most part, accelerate existing practice. What is new, however, is the generative AI use cases where we can apply the traditional data processing to unstructured textual data, speech, and audio-visual content. The ability to generate documents, auto-summarise meetings, and generate machine code was brought to public consciousness by ChatGPT.

Policy and regulatory frameworks for AI in the public sector

The government has committed to the responsible and ethical use of AI in the public sector. In 2023, the government released the Interim Generative AI guidance for the public service:

- Be transparent and accountable: Public sector agencies should be transparent about their use of AI and accountable for the decisions that AI systems make.
- Be fair and equitable: AI systems should be designed and used in a way that is fair and equitable to all users.
- Be respectful of privacy and security: AI systems should be designed and used in a way that respects the privacy and security of citizens.
- Consider Te Tiriti o Waitangi: Public sector agencies should consider the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi when designing and using AI systems.

However, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment has banned staff from using artificial intelligence technology, citing privacy risks. This may drive the unauthorised, or covert use of 'Shadow AI'. The productivity advantage that staff get from AI means that inevitably bans will be ignored. However, this is not a small rogue minority. A recent Cybernews study reported that:

- Forty-four percent of workers have used GenAI (generative AI), 25 percent of those visits leaked data.
- Confidential information being input into the GenAI tools includes internal business data, source code, and personally identifiable information.
- A study by professional social network Fishbowl reported that 68 percent of staff don't disclose AI usage to their bosses.

The answer, in my view, is not the King Canute approach of ordering the tide of AI availability to recede. The answer is to invest in trust frameworks, governance, and sensible use case identification, and to take control of AI through clearly articulated use cases and provide a pathway for public servants to have legitimate access to these capabilities.

Developing public sector use cases for AI

The public sector needs to take ownership of AI and bring it in-house to mitigate Shadow AI and external reliance. By teaching AI our own organisational language, culture, and values, as well as training and fine-tuning the AI in-house, we will retain data sovereignty and develop AI systems that meet our local context.
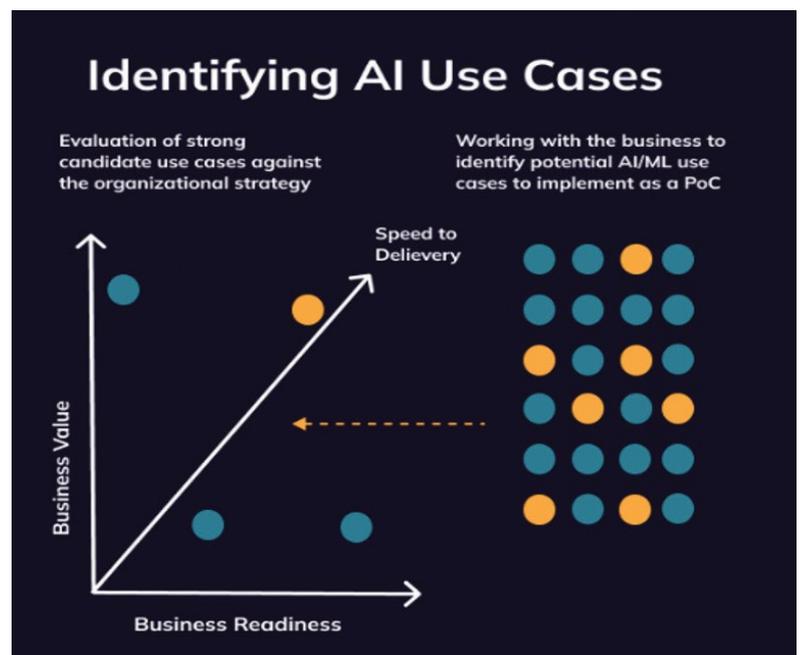
IDENTIFYING AI USE CASES
CREDIT: WWW.VERDARC.CLOUD

So public sector organisations should bring in smaller, independent New Zealand-based AI experts to act as a bridge to the multinationals, to help them design, build, and operate their own AI and machine learning (ML) practice and embed their own culture and ethics within their own digital boundaries. This ensures we build local capability, have explainable decision-making, and, more importantly, keep our public sector data in-house, sovereign, and private.

> While AI is likely to displace some public sector jobs, it is important to note that it is also likely to create new jobs and opportunities.

Why can't we copy what other countries do?
Why not just pick up the European Union's AI Act or the United States' Executive Order on Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence? This is not a sustainable approach in my view, as:

- AI regulations need to be tailored to our specific technological landscape and skills base
- AI requires local customisation to support local practices and to reflect our local contexts
- our legal system is different from other jurisdictions
- we have different social and cultural values and Tiriti obligations to meet.

Therefore there is a real opportunity to overhaul the whole information and data regulatory environment into a cohesive approach for the public sector, society, and to regulate the private sector.

Developing information, data, and AI standards
Standards can play a significant role in the regulation of AI. They can provide a framework for assessing the safety, reliability, and fairness of AI systems. This is well articulated in the Standards Australia Responsible and Inclusive AI Whitepaper.

The New Zealand public sector should adopt and adapt international standards where practicable and adapt to context. Unusually, AI is unique in having a single global harmonised international working group for standards, bringing ISO, IEC (USA), and CEN (EU) together, with only China publishing independent standards.

Issues raised by AI for public servants
While AI has the potential to transform the public sector for the better, it also raises challenges for public servants, including:

1. Job displacement
The cost of AI technology is decreasing, and it is becoming more accessible. This means that it is becoming more feasible for public sector agencies to adopt AI technologies and replace many traditional roles, particularly where they can be easily automated, are process-driven, are based on data analysis, or require the summarisation or production of text-based outputs, policies, reports, and briefings.

While AI is likely to displace some public sector jobs, it is important to note that it is also likely to create new jobs and opportunities. For example, public servants will be needed to design, develop, and manage AI systems, and public servants will be required to interpret the results of AI systems and to make decisions based on those results to mitigate bias.

Against this threat of job displacement, we must look at the existing skills that public servants bring to AI, including:

- Domain expertise: Having deep knowledge of the public sector and the problems that it faces, skills that are essential for designing and deploying AI solutions.

- Stakeholder engagement: Essential skills for ensuring that AI solutions meet stakeholders' needs.

- Critical thinking and problem-solving: Skills that are essential for evaluating AI solutions and using them to solve complex public sector problems.

Also, the poor state of information management and data governance across the public sector, lack of standardisation, interoperability, classification, descriptive metadata, and provenance means there is much work to be done to get public sector content ready for AI.

2. Bias and discrimination
Specific issues within the New Zealand context are:

- Māori and Pasifika
One of the biggest risks associated with AI is bias. AI systems are trained on data, and if that data is biased, the AI system will be biased. An AI system that is used to assess bail risk may be more likely to recommend detention for Māori and Pasifika people, even if they pose no greater risk. The historical training data shows the bias that Māori and Pasifika people were more likely to be arrested and charged with crimes.

- Privacy risks
AI systems can be used to track and monitor people's movements and activities. This can be used for legitimate purposes, such as preventing crime, but it can also be used for surveillance and social control. For example, AI was used to track the movements of people returning from overseas during the COVID-19 pandemic, to monitor self-isolation compliance. However, it raises concerns about

the government's ability to track and monitor people's movements without their consent.

- New Zealand data sovereignty

Data sovereignty is the right of individuals and communities to own and control their own data. Data sovereignty risks are that data will be collected, used, or shared without the consent of the individuals or communities to whom it belongs. The way AI systems operate, it is difficult to retrospectively remove training data.

These concerns are particularly high for Māori. If Māori do not have control over their own data, they are at risk of being exploited and marginalised, this data may be used to make decisions about Māori without their consent, and they may be discriminated against, based on their own data.

By taking a proactive approach, the public sector can help to ensure that AI is used safely and responsibly.

3. Opaque decision-making

Automated decision-making by the public sector is challenging for the obvious ethical reasons, but also to maintain the public sector's licence to operate within a democratic society. There should always be a 'human in the loop' when using AI to ensure:

- Explainability: To mitigate the risk of black box decision-making.

- Ethics: AI systems are used in a way that is consistent with human values and interests.

- Accuracy: AI is good at processing large amounts of data and identifying patterns. However, humans are better at making decisions in complex situations.

Government decision-making must be explainable for transparency and accountability. We must be able to replicate or understand how a determination was made, and a human must be responsible and accountable. By having humans and AI systems working together, we could get the best of both worlds.

4. AI hallucinations

AI hallucinations, or incorrect results from flawed analysis or the provision of misleading information, are known issues. They can lead to inaccurate public service decision-making or misleading information being presented to the public. This will damage public trust in AI and the public service through:

- Misinformation: An AI-powered chatbot could be used to generate fake news articles or social media posts.

- Bias and discrimination: AI hallucinations can also be biased and discriminatory.

- Public trust: If the public believes that AI cannot be trusted to provide accurate or reliable information, it damages the system.

So, we need to take steps to mitigate the risks posed by AI hallucinations, such as:

- Quality Assurance: To improve the accuracy and reliability of source data quality, AI system outputs, and detecting and preventing AI hallucinations.

- Governance and Stewardship: Implementing ethical guidelines, governance, and right of appeal for the use of AI in the public sector.

- Openness and Education: Publishing, Large Language Models (LLMs) methodologies, training models, and risk assessments, and educate the public about the risks and benefits of AI.

By taking a proactive approach, the public sector can help to ensure that AI is used safely and responsibly. We mustn't think that we are regulating technology; we are regulating how humans wield it. We regulate the behaviour of drivers not cars. A speed limit isn't broken by an engine, it's broken by the driver.

In conclusion, the rise of AI/ML hasn't really created new risks for organisations. It has exposed the general lack of underlying information and data governance, and the weakness of data and information regulation and practice. If the public sector has well-established ethical trust foundations in place for its information and data, then it should be well-placed to introduce AI and any new technologies as they arise.

So, the key to safely introducing AI is getting the foundational data governance and information management in place, introducing a well-governed AI Use Case Assessment model, and engaging staff on this journey.

Good intentions, with good governance, usually mean good outcomes. **PS**

Stephen Clarke is a Virtual Chief Data Officer and Information/ Data Management Consultant. Originally from the UK, Stephen has worked in senior information and data management roles across the New Zealand public sector for the past 15 years. His most recent role was as Chief Archivist, after moving on from his role as Chief Data Officer at the NZ Transport Agency. Stephen has undertaken similar roles in IRD, DIA, Office of the Auditor-General, the Office of the Ombudsman and Transpower. Internationally, Stephen is known as a standards expert, having developed standards for information management for Australia and New Zealand and internationally for ISO. As an anthropologist Stephen understands human systems, and as a technical expert he understands information systems. Using technology to connect these two systems to get the right information, to the right people at the right time, ethically, is his professional goal.

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SOPHIE (CENTRE) WITH IPANZ NEW PROFESSIONALS CHLOE CAIRNCROSS (L) AND ZAIRA NAJAM (R)   CREDIT: DOUG MOUNTAIN PHOTOGRAPHY

DARING TO DREAM: WESTPAC NEW ZEALAND AMBASSADOR DAME SOPHIE PASCOE SHARES HER STORY

IPANZ and Westpac New Zealand recently hosted Dame Sophie Pascoe, as part of her Dare to Dream programme. Chloe Cairncross, IPANZ New Professional, shares her summary of the event.

CHLOE CAIRNCROSS

In reflecting upon a lifetime of successes, tempered by periods of soul-searching and doubt, Sophie Pascoe stated, "I'm worth more than gold medals. I'm worth more than gold …" For Sophie, her success is thanks to high levels of achievement, perseverance, and athleticism.

On 24 August, the old-world lushness of the Wellington Club room was thoroughly modernised via an address that spanned living with a disability, navigating the world as a woman, and interacting with social media. IPANZ was proud to join Westpac New Zealand in hosting Dame Sophie Pascoe as part of her Dare to Dream programme, which is helping people around the country embrace their own differences, find what motivates them, and develop and achieve their own goals. The presentation was delivered to approximately 80 attendees

and many more virtually, as part of her role as a Westpac Ambassador.

So what is the formula for Dame Sophie Pascoe's success? It's not just her 11 Paralympic gold medals, making her one of New Zealand's most decorated athletes. Neither is it summarised in her Jockey ambassadorship, which reclaimed personal vulnerabilities and promoted disabled bodies in fashion. Nor is it the fact that she is the youngest person to be honoured with a Damehood. Sophie discussed her life journey, its successes and struggles, demonstrating that Dame Sophie Pascoe is all of these facets yet not reducible to any of them. "There are two identities – Sophie Pascoe, the brand, and Sophie. I can be both of these identities to make Dame Sophie Pascoe."

Sophie Pascoe has been competing in swimming since the age of seven. This is in spite of the fact that she suffered a lawnmower accident at the age of two and a half, causing irreparable nerve damage and loss of muscle in her leg. Her early success in the pool caught the attention of coach Roly Crichton, and the opportunities continued to multiply from there.

However, Sophie teaches us that strength isn't merely physical; it's the indomitable spirit within that truly propels us forward. "Colourful medals may look like a colourful life", but there is a need to understand the self and to reconcile peace with insecurities that lurk beneath a dogged devotion to routine. As an athlete, Sophie has naturally made sacrifices all her life to remain focused on the 'black line', her dedication to training

within the safety of her swimming lane. But when the whole world fell into lockdown, and routines were scuppered, she had to ask herself what it was all for.

She used the analogy that you need to rely on teammates to drive the bus before you can learn to drive it yourself. It's about finding the right people who are trustworthy and dependable so that when the bus breaks down, you can all get out together to chip in and fix it. It took having such a network around her, and the crucial words, "Are you okay?", for Sophie to realise that she doesn't have to always win gold to have people around her who love and support her. Once people feel the strength to address and combat their insecurities, their capacity to achieve is limitless.

Sophie's life story is a reminder that our social identities are not limited to just one facet – not age, athleticism, gender, or disability. Her experience of the world is shaped by her particular intersectionality. As a woman, Sophie has faced the societal pressure to conform to unrealistic body standards, feeling doubt when confronted by mirrors. As a successful sportswoman living with a disability, she has chosen to use her platform to empower people to feel beautiful and confident, just the way they are. As a woman living with a disability, promoting the brand of 'Sophie Pascoe' online, she has grown skilful in discerning the fact that all of us just want to feel loved and validated. Therefore, in order to remain grounded, it is vital to recognise that posts on social media are merely a 'highlights reel' of a person's life – the true 'likes' that matter are the real-life interactions we share with family and friends.

She concluded by recognising the harsh fact that one in four New Zealanders identify as disabled. They face unjustifiable challenges every day. Our infrastructure is not designed for all abilities. Schools, workplaces and other community spaces do not encourage enough conversation about understanding differences. However, the more people like Sophie use their

> Sophie's journey illustrates the importance of redefining strength and self-worth beyond external appearances. To conclude her talk, she reflected upon three fundamental precepts to take into all aspects of our personal and professional lives:
> - Understand that everyone's goals and journeys are different.
> - It's okay to not be okay, and that goes hand-in-hand with feeling able to ask for help.
> - Be proud of who you are.

position to project awareness, the more amenable society can be to change. For example, Sophie added her voice to a movement that ensured pay parity for Paralympians in 2018.

When up against intense athletic competition, hard choices need to be made in the journey towards achieving personal goals. Similarly, it can be a thankless movement to use a platform for social justice. However, Sophie reminded us that change is slowly happening. It might be currently happening behind closed doors, but a persistent desire to enable future generations can ensure that enduring change can take effect and become visible.

We thank Dame Sophie Pascoe for being vulnerable as 'Sophie' and for speaking on womanhood, disability, and perseverance. These reflections allow us to recognise the drive and fire within Dame Sophie Pascoe. We also thank Westpac New Zealand, who supported this inspiring event and is a valued partner for IPANZ. **PS**

Chloe Cairncross is a Wellington-based Consultant within the Operations Transformation team at Deloitte. She is a former Senior Adviser to the Ministry for Primary Industries and for the Department of Internal Affairs. She is also a member of the IPANZ New Professionals Leadership Team.

BULLYING AND RUDENESS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Dr Geoff Plimmer, Alina Haider, and Ao Zhou (Ollie) from the School of Management, Te Kura Whakahaere, Victoria University Wellington Te Herenga Waka ask some insightful questions about bullying and rudeness in the public service and seek to offer some solutions.

DR GEOFF PLIMMER

ALINA HAIDER

AO ZHOU (OLLIE)

Why are public services generally susceptible to bullying?

Bullying and other harmful behaviours are tremendously damaging to employees, witnesses, and organisations. For employees, recognised effects include anxiety, depression, poor productivity, and difficulty changing jobs. If left unaddressed, witnesses are fearful and get the message that these behaviours are acceptable. They learn not to speak up and avoid the risk involved in raising the concern. Organisations suffer from demoralisation, high turnover, reputational risk, lessened productivity and collaboration.

Globally, including New Zealand, interpersonal misconduct seems more common in public sectors compared to other sectors. Statistics NZ data suggests the New Zealand public service appears to have a higher rate of reported bullying than in the workforce as a whole, which is similar to findings from international studies. BusinessDesk-IPANZ's 2022 survey found that 22 percent of public servants reported having been personally bullied or harassed in the previous year. The reported rate of bullying is similar to that reported in earlier studies from 2013 and 2018.

There are several possible reasons for this. First, the nature of much public service work creates the conditions for poor behaviours such as bullying. Demanding and uncertain roles with limited resources create scope for conflicts. Public servants also sometimes face unenthusiastic but high needs 'customers' (such as those in prisons, schools, and hospitals), who create stress and opportunities for conflict between staff. Public servants often deal with emotionally demanding and stressful issues that require difficult interactions with each other. They often work in areas the private sector does not want to and that are inherently hard to manage. They also wrestle with conflicting or ambiguous goals (as those doing policy advice often do).

Second, poor HR systems and difficulty in dismissing people mean tackling both poor performers and perpetrators of bullying is difficult. Workplace bullying can be a toxic form of 'performance management'.

Third, the leadership of public agencies often has room for improvement, defaulting to restructures as a solution to any problem (a known driver of bullying). As the BusinessDesk-IPANZ survey results show, sometimes people are perceived to get into those positions without merit. Their mediocrity and the sense of injustice these appointments engender probably does not help either. The survey data shows that most who had been bullied did not report it (63 percent), mainly because they did not think constructive action would be taken and it was not worth the hassle.

Some definitions:
Workplace bullying is defined as "repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or a group of workers that can cause physical or mental harm. Bullying can be physical, verbal, psychological or social. This may include victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening a person."
Employment New Zealand

Incivility is defined as "low-intensity deviant workplace behavior with an ambiguous intent to harm".
Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457

Who gets bullied?
Most studies point to organisational factors that cause bullying, but some studies have looked at who gets bullied. Our perception is that bullying and other harmful behaviours can happen to anyone, but a few patterns can be discerned. Internationally, ethnic, sexual, and gender minorities are at risk, as are both high performers and low performers. Bullying reflects a fundamental power imbalance. This is reflected in the BusinessDesk-IPANZ

survey where the most junior respondents reported the highest rates of bullying (43 percent). Higher rates were also reported by both Pasifika (42 percent) and Asian (31 percent) respondents compared to others.

Those with negative affect (e.g. depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and hostility) are also at risk. Studies that attribute the cause of bullying to the victim are controversial. It is not a very productive research stream.

> Statistics NZ data suggests the public service appears to have a higher rate of reported bullying than in the workforce as a whole.

What factors specifically lead to bullying?
Many studies point to a series of job and organisational factors that often lead to bullying. Time pressure, unclear or ambiguous roles, job insecurity, limited ability to make decisions, and limited social support are all risk factors. Organisations with competition between staff, such as for rewards, also create risk. Both authoritarian (controlling and dictatorial) and avoidant bosses (that turn a blind eye to problems) create risks. Although tough bosses sometimes get results, more competent bosses can set high standards without bullying. They also know that the hidden costs of bullying are severe. Avoidant bosses used to be seen as neutral, but they are now seen as negative because they signal that harmful behaviours are acceptable.

Is general incivility or rudeness harmful?
Bullying is not the only type of bad interpersonal behaviour in the public service – incivility and harassment, for instance, overlap with bullying but are also sometimes distinct. It would be good to see a broader discussion about interpersonal misconduct generally than the (very important) legalistic and procedural issues that bullying brings up. Both research and legal definitions of bullying usually emphasise its repeated nature over a period of time. But other harmful, short-term, or one-off behaviours can also be very destructive.

Basic incivility, or workplace rudeness, for instance, often includes a lack of respect but is often subtle, covert, and plausibly deniable. It can be done in a moral tone and can involve social ostracism. If repeated and sustained, it can be defined as bullying, but is hard to prove. Studies find that, as well as being personally distressing, it harms wellbeing and innovation. Recent research at Victoria University Wellington Te Herenga Waka has found that it harms the wider team, not just individuals, long after the individual might have 'gotten over it'.

Exploratory VUW research indicates that if left unaddressed, what looks like small and harmless rudeness in the short term can erode group functioning and climate over the longer term. When victims choose to tolerate it, satisfaction, engagement, and collaboration fall over the long term. When victims choose to speak up or talk to their team about the perpetrators' behaviour, conflicts can escalate, with group members taking sides, leading to isolation or factions within teams. Managers are often incapable or reluctant to address it when it occurs: they ignore the issue or provide only emotional support rather than effective action – signalling that such behaviour is acceptable.

Ambivalent relationships seem particularly toxic

Incivility can also be embedded within ambivalent workplace relationships. These relationships contain a mix of positive and negative interpersonal behaviours, where the boss is friendly some days and then rude other days. Their unpredictable and confusing nature makes them apparently more harmful than purely negative relationships, as they lead to excessive rumination when people try to make sense of the unpredictable behaviour.

> Public servants often deal with emotionally demanding and stressful issues that require difficult interactions with each other.

Supervisors oscillating between support and undermining (for instance, praising and belittling) sow mistrust and doubt in subordinates. Subordinates experience anxiety, mood disruption, and exhaustion. They also lose confidence, enthusiasm, initiative, and engagement at work. The ongoing stress can be brought home to family members. Subordinates commonly try a range of strategies to manage their stress but ultimately end up changing teams or leaving the organisation altogether.

How can organisations address bullying and other harmful behaviours?

There has certainly been some good, renewed attention to recognising and addressing these behaviours in the New Zealand public service. But it requires a substantial change in culture, people, and skill that will take time and sustained commitment. New Zealand government agencies often seem to have reasonable policies and legal responses, but they could do more to manage it as a behavioural issue, as well as a legal or reputational risk. Progress has been marred by false accusations in response to legitimate issues being raised around poor performance.

First, leaders at the top must set the tone and build psychosocially safe climates, which concerns shared perceptions regarding "policies, practices and procedures for the protection of worker psychological health and safety" (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). This means senior management making psychological safety a priority in the face of other demands. It means communicating and working with employees about wellbeing. It requires commitment to act quickly and decisively to address problems. Organisations need to address both formal and informal processes – words on an intranet are not enough.

> The [BusinessDesk-IPANZ 2022] survey data shows that most who had been bullied did not report it (63 percent), mainly because they did not think constructive action would be taken and it was not worth the hassle.

VUW research has found significant differences in the extent to which government agencies care about psychosocial safety and that there is plenty of room for improvement. More concerned organisations have better line management, less bullying, and more job satisfaction. When executives at the top care, so do line managers. They are less likely to disregard poor behaviour and more likely to do managerial basics like plan, manage day-to-day tasks, and look after staff.

At a more practical level, there are basic steps an organisation can take. To protect everyone, clear job descriptions should reduce role ambiguity and increase autonomy, emphasise positive psychosocial behaviours, like courtesy, helping, and leadership skills, as well as task accomplishment. Identifying and sanctioning harmful behaviours as a separate category also helps. These should be followed through in other HR practices such as selection, training, and rewards. Explicit effort to weed out bad applicants needs to take place through means such as detailed and expansive reference checking and psychometric tests. Staff surveys and unions can communicate problem areas to managers, and, of course, decisive action is then needed. Policies, processes, and training also help. Often training – such as in effective meeting management – needs to be mandatory for everyone, as those most in need of it never show up. Developing and supporting managers, training them in how to deal with conflict, and holding them to account is, of course, critical. None of the above suggestions are perfect, so a comprehensive approach will likely work best.

Recent research at VUW has found that [incivility] harms the wider team, not just individuals, long after the individual might have 'gotten over it'.

Complaint investigation processes need to be clear, with multiple points of entry, so people can choose who to complain to. Mediation can help if done early in a conflict, but it needs to consider the fundamental power imbalance that often underlines harmful behaviour. Managers need to be trained in conflict management and complaint investigation – too often, they hide behind legalisms, such as requiring a written complaint before taking any action.

How organisations can address bullying:

- Leaders commit to and prioritise psycho-social safety.

- Tighten up recruitment processes to avoid employing the wrong people.

- Support managers to deal with poor behaviours – training, performance reviews.

- Clear and easy-to-use complaints processes (note the survey data shows respondents didn't think organisations would act on complaints).

- Support recovery for individuals who have suffered from bullying.

More attention needs to be paid to supporting recovery from harmful bullying, as the effects linger for a long time. Most organisations provide EAP support, but this seems insufficient for the harm to individuals, teams, and organisations that bullying and other behaviours cause. Integrated counselling programmes, in-patient treatment for victims, monetary and non-monetary forms of redress, and group recovery programmes are all under-used options. This is probably because their costs are more tangible than the intangible but severe costs of harmful behaviours. **PS**

Dr Geoff Plimmer works in the School of Management, Te Kura Whakahaere, Victoria University Wellington Te Herenga Waka. His research is multi-disciplinary and mixed method. Much of his research is concerned with how both organisational and personal characteristics shape employee experiences, and both personal and organisational capabilities.

Alina Haider is a PhD scholar in the School of Management, Te Kura Whakahaere, Victoria University Wellington Te Herenga Waka. She is researching ambivalent (ambiguous) relationships between supervisors and subordinates in her current research project, which focuses particularly on the adverse outcomes for subordinates. Her wider research interests include wellbeing, workplace relationships, coping, and emotion regulation.

Ao Zhou (Ollie) (MCOM) is a PhD candidate at Victoria University Wellington Te Herenga Waka. Her research interests include workplace incivility, gender equity, and labour movements.

COMBAT BULLYING THROUGH SUPPORT

Julia Shallcrass, Employment Lawyer and Director of the training company KiwiBoss, outlines what to do if you or your colleagues are victims of bullying in the workplace.

JULIA SHALLCRASS

In her TEDx Talk, *The antidote to bullying*, blogger and businesswoman Constance Hall revealed the antidote to bullying: showing support to survivors of bullying. Sharing her personal experience as a target of online bullying, Hall stated: "We won't combat bullying by hating bullies. We'll combat bullying by loving victims."

Hall's words remind us to support colleagues and to seek support for ourselves when dealing with workplace bullying. (The antidote to bullying | Constance Hall | TEDxChristchurch - YouTube)

Bullying in the public service

Institutional bullying is prevalent in the public service. This commonly occurs where managers bully staff to get the job done without concern for their wellbeing. Managers may set impossible targets, unmanageable caseloads, and unrealistic deadlines or inflict public humiliation when mistakes are made.

Health and safety

Given the high incidence of bullying, workers in the public service should know how to identify and reduce the impact of bullying. The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 requires workers to protect themselves and others from physical and mental harm. Research reveals the impact of bullying on an employee's physical and mental health. Bullying reduces productivity and impacts on the public service's effectiveness in serving the community.

Identify bullying behaviours

The first step in addressing bullying is identifying the behaviour. Bullying is defined by Employment New Zealand as the "repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or group of workers that can lead to physical or psychological harm".

Bullying can be overt, such as verbal abuse, cruel or insensitive comments, ridicule, or exploiting power imbalances. Covert forms of bullying, such as exclusion and sabotage, can be more difficult to identify.

Most bullying in New Zealand is managerial and 'top-down'. Managerial bullying may include nit-picking, unwarranted feedback, undermining, belittling comments and actions, and humiliating people in front of others.

While overly critical feedback may constitute bullying, the definition excludes warranted behaviours, like a difference of opinion, giving reasonable instructions and fair feedback, and formal performance management.

Behaviour outside of the usual work environment may be considered workplace bullying. Events at a staff Christmas function involving a 'drunken dunking' that led to a worker's injury amounted to workplace bullying. (*Townsend v Prospace Designz Limited* (Employment Relations Authority, 2005).)

Cyberbullying is on the rise, and the effects of these behaviours can be significant, as they are often on public forums. Where a workplace dispute between colleagues escalated outside work hours, an employee who sent her colleague abusive messages on Facebook was found justifiably dismissed. *(Adams v Wellington Free Ambulance Service Incorporated* unreported, G Wood, 23 Jul 2010, WA 8A/10.)

> The first step in addressing bullying is identifying the behaviour. Make sure the victim knows that they are not alone.

Be an active bystander

If you see bullying in the workplace, take an active role in supporting your colleagues. Speak up to support the person who has been bullied.

Make sure the victim knows that they are not alone. They may feel a range of emotions, including fear and embarrassment, so make them feel better by knowing they're heard.

What you decide to say or do will depend on the situation. While you should never put yourself at risk, consider non-confrontational action, such as speaking to the person to check that they are fine.

> Follow the complaints process under your bullying policy, including how to report and resolve bullying complaints.

Listen and take notes

Listen with empathy and encourage the victim to make a report. If a colleague tells you they have been bullied, say, "Thank you, I'm so glad you told me that", to show that you care.

Report any incidents of bullying to your employer to reduce the risk of further bullying.

Keeping a record of bullying incidents is essential for any formal complaint or investigation. Take specific notes, including the details of what happened, who was involved, location, and when the events occurred.

Support networks

Dealing with bullying behaviours can be emotionally distressing, so seek support from trusted colleagues, friends, or family members. Talk to someone you trust or seek professional counselling.

Workplaces offer Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) or counselling services so employees can access confidential support and guidance during difficult times.

Follow workplace policies and procedures

Every workplace in the public sector should have an internal complaints policy for addressing complaints of bullying.

Follow the complaints process under your bullying policy, including how to report and resolve bullying complaints.

Workplace procedures may include internal processes such as:

- **Informal processes**
  Following guidance from HR, you may raise the issue with the person bullying if it is safe and you are comfortable to do so. Calmly express your concerns and discuss how the behaviour affects you. Often, individuals may be unaware of the impact of their actions, and an open dialogue might lead to a positive outcome. Your HR person or manager may engage in this conversation on your behalf.

- **Formal processes**
  Any formal complaint needs to be put in writing and contain concise facts. A copy of the written complaint is provided to the respondent following an investigation. The respondent may receive a warning or be dismissed if there is a finding of misconduct or serious misconduct.

For serious allegations of bullying or failure to address bullying within the workplace, the employee may raise a complaint to an external body:

- **Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment**
  Employees can contact the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment to arrange free and confidential mediation for any employment relationship problem. Employees can raise a personal grievance by notifying their employer. Many employees in the public sector have successfully sued their employers for managerial bullying, or for failing to address their complaints in a timely manner.

- **Worksafe**
  Employees can notify WorkSafe if someone has a serious or immediate risk to their health and safety because of an unplanned or uncontrollable work incident, serious injury, or death.

> "We won't combat bullying by hating bullies. We'll combat bullying by loving victims."

Bullying is a serious concern within New Zealand's public service, but following the correct steps can help you protect yourself and your colleagues. Employees can actively contribute to overcoming bullying and foster a safe and supportive working environment in the public service. **PS**

Julia Shallcrass is the founder of KiwiBoss, a training company for HR professionals and people managers. She is also an employment lawyer who provides inhouse and online training to organisations throughout New Zealand. www.kiwiboss.co.nz

AGILE, TRAGILE, FRAGILE: BUSTING THE MYTHS AROUND AGILE APPROACHES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Shane Hastie, Global Delivery Lead at SoftEd, part of Skills Group, uncovers the myths around the concept of Agile and how this mindset or philosophy of work relates to the public sector.

SHANE HASTIE

Agile is the ability to move quickly and easily. In the professional context it has come to be equated with an approach to work that is about rapidly responding to changing customer and stakeholder needs, in an environment that puts people first. In this context, Agile is often called a mindset or philosophy, emphasising people and interactions over processes and tools. The approach has been increasingly adopted worldwide by national, regional, and local governments to enhance their services and responsiveness to citizens' needs.

Agile practices are characterised by small, cross-functional collaborative teams iteratively working on the highest priority work items and responding to change quickly. While many of the practices originated in software development, most of them are applicable in any type of knowledge work and many of them apply in the wider realms of physical work. Today we see Agile practices applied in almost every area of work across the private and public sector.

Along with adopting Agile thinking and practices, there has been a proliferation of 'doing agile' rather than 'being agile'. The practices of Agile can, and often are, applied without the underlying mindset. This results in organisations not getting the expected benefits and a healthy cynicism from the people who have the new ways inflicted upon them.

> Agile practices are characterised by small, cross-functional collaborative teams iteratively working on the highest priority work items and responding to change quickly.

For example, one of the core practices of most Agile teams is a daily synchronisation meeting often called the 'daily standup'. The purpose of this ceremony should be for a group of people who are doing work that is dependent on each other to synchronise how they are going to work together and collaborate over the day. Sadly, this practice is often implemented as a micro-management status report for a manager to monitor progress and allocate tasks, an approach that destroys collaboration and self-organisation.

The emphasis on adopting practices without the underlying philosophy has resulted in the proliferation of myths about what Agile approaches are.

Myth: Agile is only for software development
While Agile approaches came out of software development, they can apply equally well to other domains, especially those with a need to be responsive to change and where uncertainty is high.

Myth: Agile means no planning
Contrary to this myth, Agile does involve planning, but it is done in a different way. In Agile, planning is performed per iteration, continually until the completion of the project. This approach allows for more flexibility and adaptability to changing requirements.

Myth: Agile means no documentation
Agile does not eliminate documentation. Instead, it streamlines it to provide what is needed for the work without getting bogged down in minutiae. Agile documents requirements as user stories, with a commitment to elaborate the detail just ahead of when it is needed to implement the piece of work.

> Generally Agile projects are more transparent and visible by their very nature.

Myth: Agile means no governance
Agile does not imply a lack of governance. Organisations transitioning to Agile may need to modify their governance practices to accommodate Agile principles and generally Agile projects are more transparent and visible by their very nature.

Myth: Agile is only for small projects
Agile is not limited to small projects. The main difference between Agile and traditional methodologies is that Agile breaks down large projects into small, manageable deliveries rather than delivering them all at once.

Myth: Agile is a silver bullet that solves all problems
While Agile can help increase project success, visibility, communication, and continuous improvement, it is not a cure-all solution. Its effectiveness depends on correct implementation and alignment with the project's needs.

What is NOT Agile

Agile working is often confused with flexible working, but they are not the same. While both allow for some degree of flexibility, Agile working is more about the ability to adapt and respond to changes quickly. It involves a shift in mindset and a focus on individuals and interactions, working software, customer collaboration, and responding to change.

Another concept that is often confused with Agile is Scrum, which is a specific Agile framework used in software development and project management. Scrum is characterised by its use of sprints, self-organising teams, and specific roles such as the Scrum Master and Product Owner. However, Scrum is just one of the many methodologies that fall under the Agile umbrella. Agile itself is a broader philosophy that can be applied to various industries and projects.

Lean is a methodology focused on maximising customer value while minimising waste. It aims to create more value for customers with fewer resources. Although Lean shares some similarities with Agile, such as the focus on continuous improvement and customer value, it is not an Agile methodology.

Six Sigma is a data-driven methodology aimed at reducing defects and improving processes. It focuses on identifying and removing the causes of errors and minimising variability in business processes. While Six Sigma shares some principles with Agile, such as the focus on continuous improvement, it is a separate methodology with its own set of tools and techniques.

Kanban is a visual workflow management system that helps teams manage their work more efficiently. It is often associated with Agile methodologies because it focuses on continuous improvement, flexibility, and collaboration. However, Kanban is not an Agile methodology itself but can be used in conjunction with Agile frameworks like Scrum.

Myth: Agile is undisciplined

Agile methodologies require a high level of discipline by outlining a clear process and set of rules. Agile promotes self-organisation within these rules.

The benefits of agile approaches

Agile methodologies create a structure that allows teams to organise, evaluate, and adapt work processes more easily. Instead of having a single master plan, Agile focuses on achieving many small milestones. Responsibility is shared across the team rather than being concentrated in a single product manager or executive.

Generally organisations report increased customer satisfaction, reduced time to deliver tangible outcomes, improved employee engagement, and greater transparency in the flow of work when they adopt Agile approaches.

Agile in the public sector

There are several published reports of Agile adoption across public sector organisations around the world. Here are a few:

General Services Administration of the US Government (GSA): The GSA has made significant progress in using Agile methodologies to modernise applications and integrate flexible architecture. Their success story demonstrates the potential of Agile practices in the public sector.

Port of Rotterdam: The Port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands adopted Agile development to improve its software development processes and deliver better services to its stakeholders.

Dunedin City Council: The council adopted the Lean Agile Procurement (LAP) approach while selecting a Contract Lifecycle Management (CLM) solution. This collaborative approach reduced the usual procurement process from three months to three days, ensuring that the solution (Portt) was the best fit to automate supplier contracting activities, streamline approvals, manage flows, and capture rich data for the council.

Adopting Agile methodologies in the public sector can be challenging due to various factors, such as resistance to change, bureaucratic structures, and unique requirements of government projects.

Digital Transformation Agency, Australia: The agency applies Agile to streamline public services. One instance is the myGov portal, a one-stop-shop for government services. Using Agile, the agency has continuously improved the portal based on user feedback, delivering frequent value to users. Another success story is the simplification of obtaining the Australian Business Number for businesses. With Agile methods, the agency broke down this complex process into manageable parts and delivered a user-friendly service.

Challenges to Agile adoption in the public sector

Adopting Agile methodologies in the public sector can be challenging due to various factors, such as resistance to change, bureaucratic structures, and unique requirements of government projects. Some common challenges and pitfalls include:

Changes to processes, structure, and culture: Agile implementation requires significant adjustments to existing processes, organisational structures, and workplace culture, which can be challenging to achieve in the public sector due to its hierarchical nature and perceived resistance to change.

Limited understanding and experience with Agile: Public sector organisations may have limited exposure to Agile methodologies, leading to a lack of understanding and expertise among team members and stakeholders. This can impact the success of Agile implementation and lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication.

Resistance to change and cultural differences: Public sector organisations may resist change, particularly when adopting new ways of working. This resistance can be driven by various factors, including a lack of understanding of Agile's benefits, concerns about cost and resources, and a preference for traditional approaches.

Stakeholder expectations and management: Public sector organisations have a larger set of stakeholders to satisfy and more complex social, political, and economic objectives that may be subject to change. Managing stakeholder expectations and aligning Agile teams with these objectives can be challenging.

Lack of documentation: Agile methodologies prioritise working products over comprehensive documentation, which can pose challenges for government teams in ensuring compliance, accountability, auditability, and transparency.

To overcome these challenges, public sector agencies can invest in training and resources for team members and stakeholders, effectively communicate the benefits of Agile, address concerns, and develop a customised Agile

methodology that meets the unique needs of the project and the organisation's culture.

Is Agile worth it?

Adopting Agile in state and local governments involves a shift in mindset and organisational culture. Agile is not a panacea of preset tools and practices but a mindset of organisational change. As a process of continuous improvement, Agile approaches must themselves evolve over time with doing, testing, and improvement.

The Agile Government Center, an initiative of the National Academy of Public Administration, has developed a set of Agile principles to drive government improvement. The network continues to develop case studies of Agile government in action. It acts as a source of assistance to those who want to adopt and implement Agile to provide public goods and services that fully meet customer needs and build public trust.

> *An Agile way of working is a powerful tool for the public sector to respond quickly and effectively to changes.*

To successfully implement Agile approaches, organisations need to focus on people over processes, build quality into the work that is done (excellence in delivery), establish self-organising teams, identify clear success measures for Agile projects, encourage team communication, make documentation important, and organise sessions, forums, and regular reviews of the implementation to adapt the ways of working to the local context.

In conclusion, an Agile way of working is a powerful tool for the public sector to respond quickly and effectively to changes. By debunking the myths and understanding the principles and benefits of Agile working, public sector agencies can harness the potential to improve their services and meet citizens' needs. **PS**

Over the past 40+ years Shane Hastie has been a practitioner and leader of developers, testers, trainers, project managers, and business analysts, helping teams to deliver results that align with overall business objectives. He spent 20+ years as a professional trainer, coach, and consultant specialising in Agile practices, business analysis, project management, testing, and methodologies in Australia, New Zealand, and around the world. Shane was the founding Chair of Agile Alliance New Zealand and is co-chair of the Agile Alliance Agile Coaching Ethics initiative, working to produce a code of ethical conduct for Agile coaching. He is an International Coaching Federation (ICF) registered Professional Coach. He leads the Culture and Methods editorial team for InfoQ.com where he hosts the weekly InfoQ Culture Podcast.

BRINGING TOGETHER DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS TO PROTECT A FREE, OPEN, AND SECURE INTERNET

Rachel Wolbers, Head of Global Engagement for Meta's Oversight Board, is one of the New Zealand 2023 Ian Axford Fellows in Public Policy. This year she worked in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Here she explains her work.

RACHEL WOLBERS

F riday, 15 March 2019, will forever be remembered as one of the darkest days in New Zealand's history. On that afternoon, a violent extremist live streamed himself on social media murdering 51 people worshipping in mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. This horrific attack was carefully planned to spread rapidly across the internet. And it did. In the first 24 hours, platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Reddit removed over 1.5 million copies of the video. This atrocity spurred New Zealanders into action to put an end to this type of violence and horror. As Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern wrote, "A terrorist attack like the one in Christchurch could happen again unless we change. New Zealand could reform its gun laws, and we did. We can tackle racism and discrimination, which we must. We can review our security and intelligence settings, and we are. But we can't fix the proliferation of violent content online by ourselves."

Coalition commitments

In the weeks following, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern partnered with French President Emanuel Macron to bring together governments, tech companies, and civil society to adopt a set of commitments to eradicate terrorist and violent extremist content (TVEC) online, known as the Christchurch Call to Action (the Call). At the core of the Call, the governments and tech companies agreed to make changes to prevent the posting of terrorist content online, to ensure its efficient and fast removal, and to prevent the

use of live-streaming as a tool for broadcasting terrorist attacks. To succeed, the group would need to work closely with civil society to ensure freedom of expression was protected and the voices of the victims and survivors heard. Emerging from this coalition was a multistakeholder initiative (MSI) designed to address a complicated problem. The answer was not one that could be solved easily through government regulation, company policies, and technical measures, or civil society efforts on their own. Instead, the Call engaged a whole-of-society approach where the stakeholders tackled the problem together.

As an Ian Axford Fellow in Public Policy with the Call team in the New Zealand Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, my focus was on how multistakeholderism and non-regulatory solutions can more effectively drive governmental and tech company policy changes than prescriptive regulatory solutions. I came to this role with a decade of experience working on internet policy issues on Capitol Hill, in the United States Executive Branch, in civil society, and at social media companies. During my time in Washington, DC, and Brussels, I have seen how well-intentioned legislation to address a particular harm caused by social media can have serious consequences on human rights and the freedom of expression. For example, in 2018, the United States Congress passed the Stop Enabling Sex Trafficking Act (SESTA) to hold online platforms responsible if they were facilitating sex trafficking. However, SESTA's vague language unintentionally requires United States-based online platforms to censor a wide range of speech from legal sex workers around the world. Understanding this challenge, after March 15, 2019, the New Zealand government made it illegal to distribute the Christchurch shooter's manifesto and video but took a more holistic approach to address the problem of TVEC online by setting up the Christchurch Call to Action.

Progress to action

Four and a half years later, the Call's supporters remain dedicated to the shared objective to eliminate TVEC online and uphold the principle of free, open, and secure internet. The success of the Call is built upon the organisation's multistakeholder community, which has grown to over 120 countries, online service providers, partners, and civil society organisations. The Call supporters fulfil the Call commitments through a bottom-up approach where stakeholders are empowered to implement changes independently and through large-scale collaboration. Critics may argue this approach lacks accountability, but the Call has spurred a tremendous amount of action, including the creation of crisis-response protocols, changes to trust and safety measures to prevent live-streaming of TVEC, and strengthening industry collaboration to identify and remove TVEC in a rights-respecting fashion.

My role within this

Given this success, my mission in New Zealand was to better understand how others can replicate this type of MSI as stakeholders worldwide are trying to grapple with emerging content governance challenges. Firstly, I explored how governments and tech companies have been attempting to regulate content on their own, through laws like SESTA or social media company's terms of service enforcement mechanisms. Acknowledging that these efforts have fallen short, I looked at the many MSIs that built the internet itself, including the Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers and the Internet Engineering Task Force, which created many of the technical foundations of the internet. Authoritarian governments increasingly turn to multilateral institutions like the United Nations to undermine the multistakeholderism built into the internet. This means MSIs like the Call are more crucial than ever because it brings together diverse stakeholders to protect a free, open, and secure internet.

Secondly, to provide guidance to the Call team, I analysed these single-sided efforts, current internet governance MSIs, and the multilateral models threatening human rights online. This analysis led to the creation of a set of best practices for MSIs addressing content governance issues. These steps include practical solutions on how to set up an MSI that is solving a concrete problem, including the right stakeholders, setting up clear terms of reference, and consistently maintaining stakeholder momentum. This framework will be helpful for the Call team to consider as the content governance is rapidly changing with the rise of tools like generative artificial intelligence (AI). AI presents both opportunities to eliminate TVEC online more effectively as well as challenges because terrorists and violent extremists will be able to use AI to easily create TVEC.

Overall, the Call has achieved tremendous success and should be a model other MSIs replicate as they consider content governance challenges. **PS**

Rachel Wolbers is an Ian Axford Fellow who worked with the New Zealand Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and is the Head of Global Engagement for Meta's Oversight Board, where she leads outreach to stakeholders on cases and policy issues pending before the Board. Prior to the Oversight Board, she was an internet policy specialist with the Office of International Affairs at the United States National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Rachel was the policy director at Engine, a non-profit organisation that bridges the gap between policymakers and startups. Previously, she worked on Capitol Hill for a member of the United States House Judiciary Committee. Rachel holds a BA in international economics from George Washington University and a Juris Doctorate from Case Western Reserve University School of Law.

CHANGE OF SCENE WITH VSA

Public Sector journal editor, Kathy Catton, spoke with Kate Wareham, Chief Executive at Volunteer Services Abroad, to find out how she moved from a public service role into a not-for-profit position and what she learned along the way.

KATE WAREHAM

Volunteer Service Abroad - Te Tūao Tāwāhi (VSA) was founded 61 years ago with Sir Edmund Hillary as its President. It is New Zealand's largest and most experienced volunteering agency working in international development. It sends people overseas to share their skills, experience, and knowledge directly with local people and communities to make real, sustainable change. VSA works in nine countries across the wider Pacific and in Timor Leste and Cambodia.

"Our work is funded primarily through a strategic relationship with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and independently generated income," says Kate. "Our goal is to transfer the right resources, skills, and knowledge so that the impact achieved during an assignment remains long after a volunteer returns to New Zealand, creating a fair future for all. We're an independent, secular, and not-for-profit (NFP) organisation, governed by a Council (Board) and registered as an incorporated society and charity.

"We exist to connect people and transform lives through our mahi – and I can tell you this really does happen! We have a newsletter that anyone can sign up for to tell you more about some of the volunteer stories. One person can make a huge difference, and, in turn, the long-lasting effects of volunteering on the path of returned volunteers' lives is remarkable."

What's the focus of your role as CEO?
When I joined in August 2022, my first focus was on restarting our volunteer programme in countries where borders had been closed and there was hesitancy about

visitors coming in from overseas. Having a measured approach to this was crucial, and we have taken the lead from our VSA teams based in the countries we work in.

My focus now has moved to growing the VSA team to meet the demand for volunteers and respond to a rise in interest from New Zealanders keen to change their lives post-pandemic and do something meaningful through volunteering. As a VSA work whānau, we love what we do, as it's easy to see the difference we're making, and it's a positive workplace to be part of. Our team is made up of 50 people based in Aotearoa and around the Pacific, from more than 15 different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities. There is always food and laughter and plenty to learn about and from each other.

In a time of prolonged pandemic, what are the challenges in recruiting volunteers?
For VSA, Covid-19 meant a complete rethink of how volunteering was done – and quickly. All our overseas volunteers returned to New Zealand and many just hours before the first nationwide lockdown started in March 2020. It's incredible how fast VSA moved to an online volunteering mode and supported existing volunteers and the organisations they were working with to adapt to this. It was a long couple of years with no in-person contact for the VSA team as a whole, and the tears of joy we have reconnecting now are priceless. Many of our team are meeting each other for the first time, so working as a team across our model has been challenging when we are still forming relationships

VSA VOLUNTEER, JEANETTE DAYSH, WITH PARTNER ORGANISATION COLLEAGUES AT THE COOK ISLANDS CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS INC.

and getting to know each other. VSA is now back with a presence in 11 countries, and while we are still careful around the health of volunteers, recruitment is going strong with about 50 assignments ranging from Policy Advisers to a Mushroom Cultivation Specialist, being advertised on our website.

Which government agencies do you primarily work with and how do you continue to foster these partnerships?

Our most important partnership is with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), as we work with them to meet the New Zealand government's objectives for development in the wider Pacific. We are in almost daily contact with them, and it's been amazing to have this support and to work on shared goals. The MFAT teams in our countries are key to the work we do. Every volunteer meets the High Commissioner or Ambassador in their first week in the country they are volunteering in. VSA teams have strong relationships with the New Zealand communities in their countries and the Kiwi spirit is evident in the way we support each other through thick and thin. As the leader for VSA, knowing this support is present is so important and helps me sleep at night when there are things like cyclones tearing through areas where we have VSA teams and volunteers based. Our other main partners include regional and central government agencies, local and national NGOs, education and health organisations, universities, and health clinics. We also work with New Zealand and regional partners such as UNICEF, UN Women, and the Pacific Community (SPC).

How has your experience in the public sector prepared you for this role?

One thing I learned early on is that it's not possible to be 100 percent prepared for everything in a new role, let alone a chief executive position. That's part of the fun and the fear factor, too! I learned a great deal from being Chair of Water Safety New Zealand which has helped me in this role. For example, knowing what it's like to lead a small organisation with limited resources, working across a range of stakeholders to achieve results, and managing a Board were helpful insights to have. At the Department of Internal Affairs as well as the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and the Ministry of Social Development, I was able to learn about a wide range of topics that have helped me. This includes things you need to consider in running a sound organisation, like managing privacy, planning for wellbeing, health and safety, and investing in the right technology systems. I've found I apply this knowledge all the time and often reach out to people I've met along the way to phone a friend for advice, examples, and help.

KATE AT THE MARKETS IN APIA, SAMOA

MARINA KEIL FROM SAMOA RECYCLING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (SRWMA), MEETING WITH KATE DURING HER VISIT

How was the leap from the public service to a not-for-profit?

Making the jump out of a comfortable senior-level role in the public service to try something new in the NFP sector can be daunting, and I've been asked a few times how to do it. 'Just Do It' comes to mind, but also, I'd say take your time to talk to people working in the NFP sector to get some honest reflections on the pros and cons. And remember, it's a great way to learn skills that will apply well in public service or other sectors, too, so there is no wrong door to take. **PS**

Kate Wareham was appointed Te Tumu Whakarae/Chief Executive at Volunteer Service Abroad/Te Tūao Tāwāhi in August 2022. She is also currently Board Chair for Water Safety New Zealand. Before this role she was most recently at Te Tari Taiwhenua/Department of Internal Affairs (DIA), where she was Deputy Chief Executive, Organisational Capability and Services. Before DIA, Kate held roles as Chief Operating Officer at the Human Rights Commission and Director Corporate and Engagement at the Social Wellbeing Agency. Kate has been in senior roles in service delivery and corporate areas at the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. Earlier in her career, Kate worked at Deloitte, Plunket, ANZ, and Department of Corrections in a range of people and capability roles.

PERFECT STORM

The 2023 Young Leader of the Year award at the Spirit of Service Awards went to Saunoa (Noa) Samasoni. Kathy Ombler chats with her about what guides her in her work and how her background has informed her work as a public servant.

Traditional Pacific values of service have always guided Noa. For her they are especially relevant now, in her work as a public servant and in her current role, helping Auckland families return to their homes that were pummelled during last January's storm. As Kāinga Ora Senior Project Manager – PM Lead, Auckland Flood Recovery, Noa has been awarded the Public Service Commission's Te Tohu mō te Kaiārahi Rangatahi o te Tau Young Leader of the Year for 2023.

When Auckland was hit by devastating rain last January, just under 2000 Auckland homes were affected by either leaks, floods, or landslips, and Kāinga Ora needed an entirely new process to manage their recovery, says Noa.

"I think, at first, we underestimated how big this event really was. The volume of work was massive. So many houses were impacted at different levels, with just under 700 homes requiring significant work. Kāinga Ora stood up this new programme as part of our response to the flood recovery, and in my previous capacity as Maintenance Team Leader in the Māngere/Manukau area, I was asked to lead the project management team focused on reinstating the many flood-affected homes across Auckland.

"Living in Māngere, I had seen the flooding first-hand and was part of the team who were on the ground as soon as it was safe. I was very lucky my own home wasn't affected except for access in and out of the street," she adds.

What also helps in her Kāinga Ora role is that Noa has
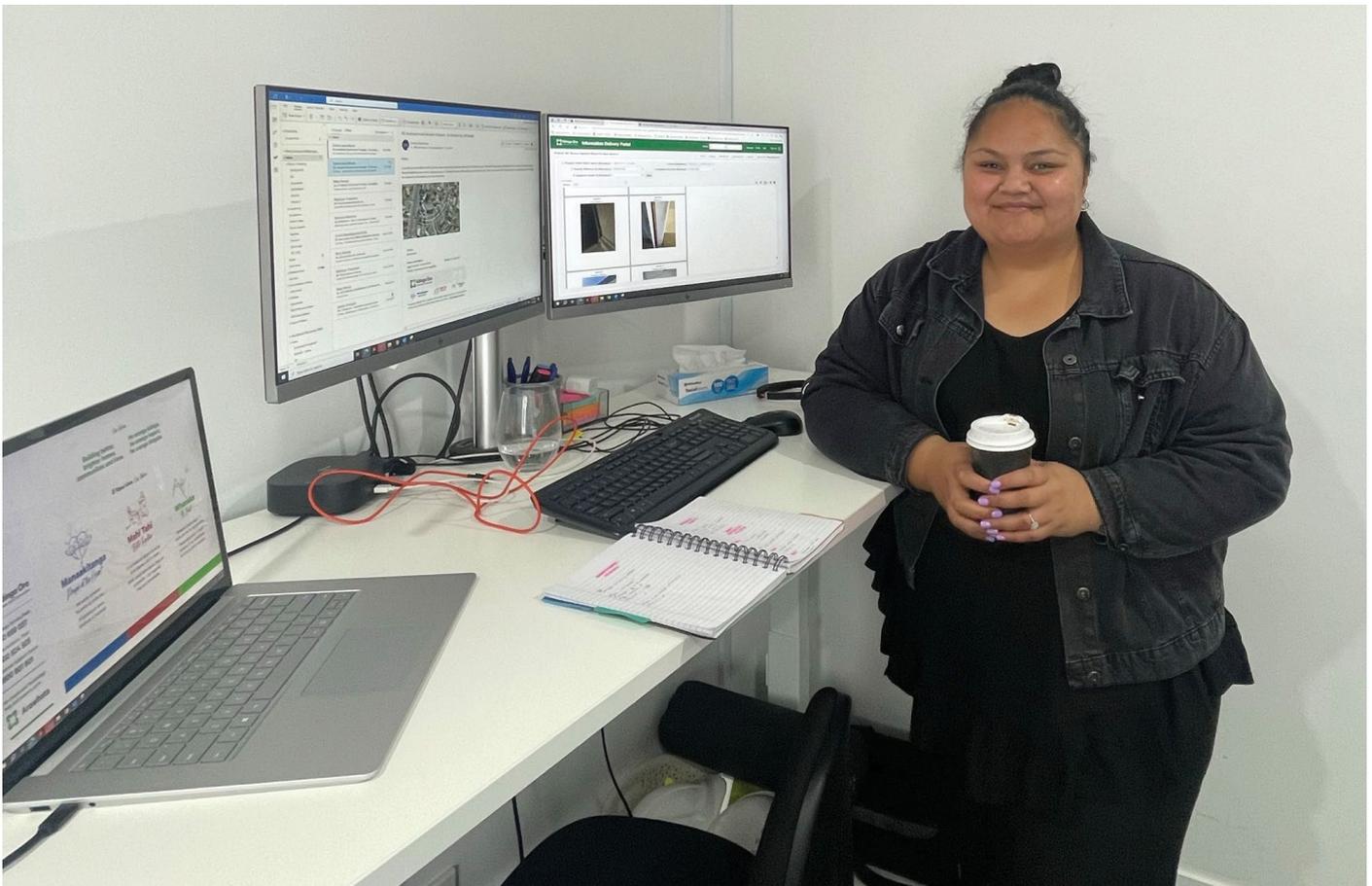
first-hand experience of state housing. Her parents immigrated here from Sāmoa, and she was born and raised in a state house in Māngere. "I'd often help my parents by translating for them when they were visited by people from Housing New Zealand, now Kāinga Ora.

"Have your 'why' and think of it every day and let that be your driving force."

"I remember how my parents struggled to understand these people, and they were the type of tenants who never spoke out or asked for anything in regard to the house we lived in due to not fully understanding what Housing New Zealand could and couldn't do. I promised myself that if I was ever given the opportunity to become a public servant, I would think about my parents and talk in simple terms, always break everything down, so it's easy to understand and ensure our families knew what Housing New Zealand can do for them."

Noa says she didn't actually plan to become a public servant. "I went straight from college to university to study a BA in Criminology and Sociology, but after 18 months took a break and joined the workforce."

She took on call centre work, first with Qantas and then as a Housing Adviser within the contact service centre (CSC) for Housing New Zealand (now Kāinga Ora).

"I really think that the contact centre opened my eyes and laid the foundation for what it means to be a public servant. I got to talk with so many people from different backgrounds, different ethnicities, and different upbringings, which I thoroughly enjoyed. It helped me understand how Kāinga Ora works and showed me paths I could choose within the organisation if I wanted to pursue a career here. I became a public servant by accident, and the short time I spent in the CSC led to my decision to stay," Noa says.

She's now been with Kāinga Ora for seven years. "After eight months in the contact centre I was very fortunate to be given an opportunity within the Maintenance Delivery Team, first as an administrator then working my way to a supervisor role.

"In the Maintenance Supervisor role, I covered a number of different portfolios in Northland and Auckland and worked with different Maintenance Partners. In 2020, I was appointed as the Maintenance Team Leader in Counties Manukau." For now, Noa is still with the Auckland Flood Recovery programme, reinstating damaged homes in the face of continued bad weather.

"This project has taught me so much. It's taught me the

PARENTS VAEILA TEVELI SAMASONI (R), SIOLO SAMASONI (L) WITH NOA

importance of patience and persevering. It's also taught me resilience. Initially we expected to have all the repairs done by the end of June; however, as the repairs are complex and require coordination, we needed more time to get the job done and done well. We also need to consider our customers and ensure they are well supported through this journey. It's also reminded me to be kind. That includes to my colleagues and to myself."

"My name is on that plaque, but I see it as an award for everyone who set up this amazing programme."

In this respect, Noa insists the award is not just about her. "My personal journey is blessed to have had a lot of people giving me support and kindness, amazing people with amazing aspirations. My name is on that plaque, but I see it as an award for everyone who set up this amazing programme."

And it's the core Pacific values of service that Noa most embodies. "For me, growing up as a Pacific Islander, service is ingrained in you. It starts at home; it's then reinforced in church and schools, and now in my everyday mahi. There is no discrimination when it comes to service; it's about service to anyone, in any shape or form, big or small, and it can make a big difference. My parents always reminded me that it's just what you do."

Asked what she would say to other young people considering a public service career, her answer was simple. "Do it," says Noa. "It's worth it. It's fulfilling despite the challenges. I never lose sight of why I've joined. Have your 'why' and think of it every day and let that be your driving force." **PS**

LEADERSHIP THROUGH UNCERTAINTY AND DISRUPTION

Adithi Pandit, from Deloitte, looks at Deloitte New Zealand's 2023 *State of the State* report as it informs the capabilities required for the public sector.

ADITHI PANDIT

The current landscape of challenges that lie ahead of Aotearoa New Zealand make for a level of complexity, uncertainty, and disruption that is significant in our lifetimes. Many of the 'megatrends' that shape our possible futures are global in nature, and we should look to how others are responding, but with the knowledge that they will also create tensions that are particular to a uniquely New Zealand context, culture, and way of life.

What is a 'megatrend'? It can be defined as any far-reaching global shift with effects that are changing our society. Here at home, we are faced with climate disasters, persistent inequity, polarising perspectives, COVID-19 recovery, geopolitical tensions, an ageing and changing population, and an accelerating technology landscape.

Against this backdrop, Deloitte New Zealand's 2023 *State of the State* report, titled *Into the Wind: Capabilities to Navigate Uncertainty*, explores complexity, uncertainty, and

disruption as they apply to our country, and discusses the role of the public sector as a steward in implementing seven core capabilities to secure a positive future for all.

In this article, we take our *Capabilities to Navigate Uncertainty* findings and recommendations and deep dive into some of the capabilities that will best guide New Zealand's public service forward. We were also lucky enough to gain insight from New Zealand Police Deputy Commissioner: Police, Leadership and Culture, Chris de Wattignar, who gave us his take on leadership through uncertain times.

The role of the public sector

There is a need for our public sector to strengthen its strategic capabilities, think and act in systems, manage risks, and invest in resources for the future. The public sector is tasked with looking after our critical systems, such as social welfare, education, health, infrastructure, and risk management. When it comes to understanding the role of the public service, we asked Chris which of the proposed capabilities resonated with him most. He identified the "sophisticated partnerships and collective action" capability, which he found most relevant for effective policing in New Zealand.

"The public rightly expect our responses to be exceptional. To achieve that, some of the deeper problems relative to those calls for our service require interventions from other agencies, NGOs, and iwi. This is why partnerships and collaboration are the lifeblood of policing," says Chris.

Using the example of youth crime, Chris expresses that by the time young people come to police attention in a negative light, there have generally been difficulties at home and in their education or in their healthcare. What frontline staff experience with youth crime is often the nexus of the health, education, social, and justice sectors. Police cannot fix those issues alone, so they rely on the collective impact
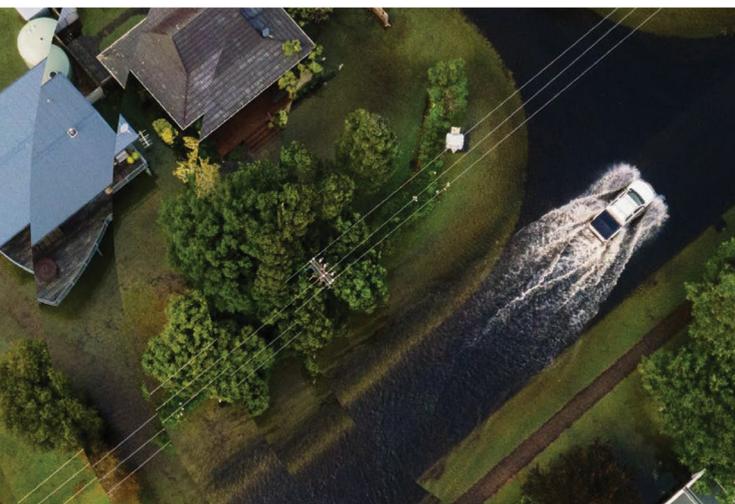
of early intervention, prioritising focused prevention through partnerships.

The better we coordinate agency resources, the more efficient and considered we become as a public service in our effectiveness and impact. This reflects the State of the State capability of bringing diverse thinking and skills to our most pressing challenges to create more inclusive, responsive, and enduring solutions.

Talent and leadership

Strategic, courageous leadership is necessary to deliver on long-term opportunities and challenges. When we look across the four capitals in Aotearoa (financial, social, natural, and human), we consistently hear that there is only one reliable hedge against disaster: the depth and breadth of human capability. Chris says the "public service will need to keep up to pace with the changing needs of New Zealanders and future generations. The children at high school right now are our future leaders and will inherit our country and its public services."

When considering the role of the public sector as a steward we can see a new challenge for public service talent and leadership: to work with New Zealand businesses and communities to create talented human capital for our future.

NZ Police looks for leaders who start by collaborating with others; can think outside of the short term; are reflective, agile, and adaptable in their approaches; and focus on enabling their teams to succeed, but deliver impact, continues Chris.

When we look ahead, we see that those who are best prepared to identify emerging trends, see the opportunities within them, and take advantage of them, can come out on top. We will need to be deliberate in the strategic capabilities we develop to respond to opportunity if we are to create equitable outcomes for all. This is our opportunity to make choices, take action, and adapt our pathways to secure the futures of the generations to come. **PS**

Adithi Pandit leads Deloitte New Zealand's strategy and business design practice and social innovation and impact services. Adithi helps organisations transform their businesses through changes to people, process, and technology – in a way that is collaborative, innovative, and truly customer-centric. Her passion is for bringing together individuals and organisations to address 'wicked problems' at multiple levels. Adithi has led large-scale organisation change, including the redesign of social housing services, welfare payment services, accident compensation services, and childcare and protection services.
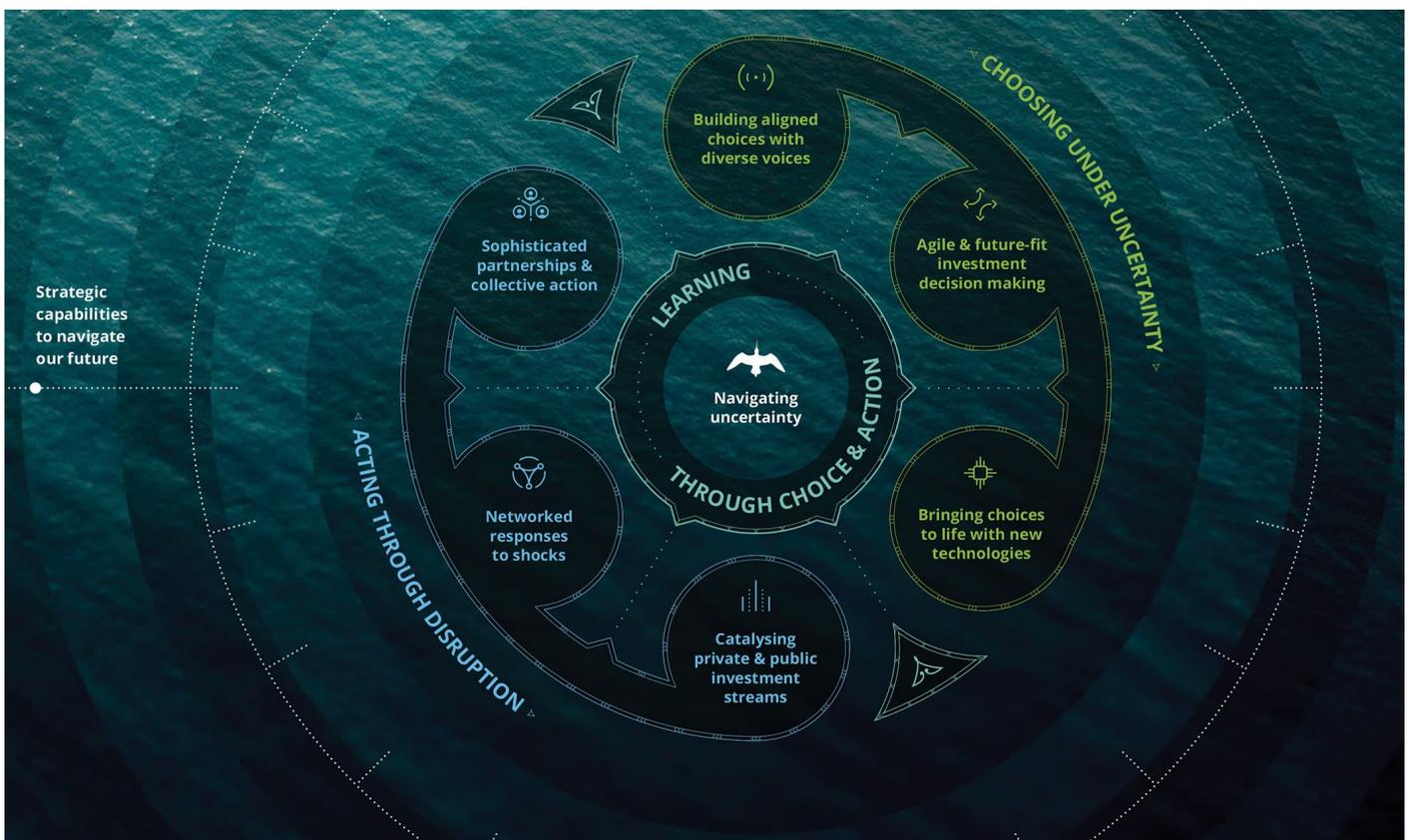
THE SEVEN STRATEGIC CAPABILITIES TO NAVIGATE OUR FUTURE

BOOK AND PODCAST REVIEW

IPANZ New Professionals' Network Co-Chair, Cullum Peni-Wesche, reviews the *Offbeat* podcast series and the book *Turncoat* by Tīhema Baker.

CULLUM PENI-WESCHE

Podcast

Offbeat is a six-part podcast series produced by New Zealand Police. It provides listeners with insights into the variety of work that police officers can specialise in. Although the podcast may be a useful HR and recruitment tool, it also provides the general listener with some light-hearted stories on what it's like to work for the New Zealand Police. It highlights the realities, both good and confronting, that staff in various roles face.

When thinking about the work that Police undertake, the first images that come to mind might be of frontline roles such as highway patrol cars on busy roads, or groups of police constables walking the beat on a Friday night in town. In episode two of *Offbeat* we hear from Detective Sergeant Sara Arrow who reflects on her work in Search and Rescue (SAR). Sara shares her story on what drove her to apply for SAR, how they liaise with families of people who are reported missing, and what she enjoys about her work. *Offbeat* provides listeners with this information in a light-hearted storytelling format. It is free to access on platforms such as iHeart Radio, Apple Music, and Spotify.

Book

In the distant future, Planet Earth has been colonised by an alien race and humankind has become a minority species who no longer retain control of their home. An uneasy agreement was formed between aliens and humans through the signing of a document known as the Covenant of Wellington, which resulted in the establishment of an alien system of government over Earth, known as 'the Hierarch'. As time progresses, it's clear the Hierarch regularly breaches the Covenant to the detriment of humans.

Turncoat, by Tīhema Baker, published by Lawrence and Gibson, is a satirical sci-fi book, where we follow the journey and experiences of Daniel, a human who is on a mission to change the Alien Hierarch from within. Daniel's experience working for the Hierarch also mirrors the experiences of Māori who work in New Zealand's public sector, where agencies have, throughout our history, breached Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Our story invites readers to step into Daniel's shoes and see his perspective. Without sharing spoilers, *Turncoat* provides a commentary on the experiences of those who are working to change a system from within – and the difficulties they face from their families, communities, and agencies within the system they now serve. To what extent can Daniel be empowered to make the changes he wants to see, and how much of a toll will it take on him?

The story is well paced, insightful, and at times can be an eye-opening read; however, there are plenty of public sector-isms that many of us will no doubt relate to, such as the ritual of hosting a morning tea to welcome Daniel to his new role in the Hierarch. **PS**

Cullum Peni-Wesche (Ngāti Raukawa) is Co-chair of the IPANZ New Professionals' Network, and a member of the IPANZ Board. A Young Pacific Leader and a member of the Institute of Directors, Cullum has a background in emergency management, Māori strategy, and international engagement. As a volunteer firefighter, these skills have also enabled him to deploy internationally with Fire and Emergency New Zealand in response to the onset of large emergencies. At the time of writing, Cullum is on secondment as Manager, National Operations Centre at the Ministry for Primary Industries, where he works to strengthen MPI's capacity through real-time data, insights, and information.
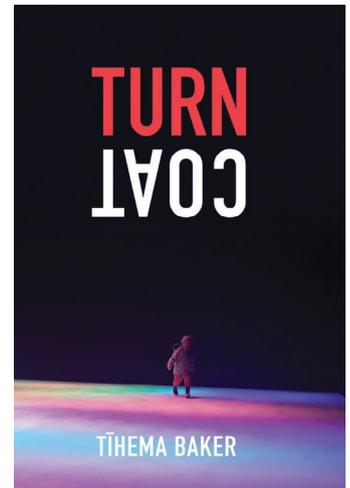
DID YOU KNOW? FIVE FACTS ABOUT NEW ZEALAND CUSTOMS SERVICE

Uncover some fascinating facts and intriguing insights into one of the oldest government departments in Aotearoa New Zealand: Customs. Its Māori name – Te Mana Ārai o Aotearoa – translates as 'the authority that screens and protects New Zealand'.

1 Customs was established on 5 January 1840, and the first head of Customs was appointed on the shores of Kororāreka, Bay of Islands. New Zealand's first civil servants started collecting Crown revenue from rum merchants, whalers, sailors, and other traders. Customs' primary function back then was to gather revenue and combat smugglers. In many respects, this has not changed. By the 1980s, trade's importance to the economy saw Customs expand its focus to help facilitate New Zealand's growing international trade relationships.

2 Customs currently collects the second largest amount of revenue for the Crown. For the financial year ending 30 June 2023, Customs collected $18.6 billion in Crown revenue, an increase from $17.5 billion in the financial year ending 30 June 2022. Customs collects four types of revenue: Goods and Services Tax on imported taxable goods; Excise Tax on products like beer and wine; Excise Equivalent Tax on goods such as tobacco, beer, wine, and fuel; and Customs Duty on imported goods, where a New Zealand manufactured equivalent exists.

3 Customs detector dogs are trained to sniff out narcotics, firearms, and even cash! These clever canines are an important tool in Customs' layered defence to identify border risks, including money laundering and drug smuggling. Customs' Detector Dog Unit reached a significant milestone this year – celebrating its 50th anniversary. Established in 1973, the first two detector dogs entered operational service in 1974 and were trained on narcotics. Cannabis was in the spotlight back then, and the list of narcotics has since grown, but Customs dogs are as swift to adapt as ever.

4 New Zealand's border isn't just at international airports; the maritime border is marked 12 nautical miles from our coastline. And there is also a cyber border. As cross-border specialists, Customs is the only agency mandated, under the Customs & Excise Act 2018, to prosecute offending across our cyber border. The internet has resulted in an exponential increase in the amount of objectionable material, mainly child sexual abuse imagery, which is imported (downloaded) or exported (uploaded) across our cyber border. Customs works closely with Police and Internal Affairs locally, who together are part of a global taskforce dedicated to combatting this type of crime.

5 Customs is required to issue clearances for all arriving and departing international craft, including the various types of maritime vessels such as yachts, fishing vessels, and cruise ships, as well as all kinds of aircraft. In the last financial year, Customs issued 34,465 clearances for craft arrivals, and 34,128 craft clearances for departures. There are no Customs exceptions, not even rockets. Every time Rocket Lab launches a rocket, Customs' Maritime Team, based in Napier, issues a departure clearance for the rocket at the Mahia Peninsula launch site. Export entry lodgements are also cleared for any cargo on board. In the last financial year, Customs completed 4.4 million export transactions for goods leaving the country. **PS**

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