

Senate estimates – 23 October 2017

Gavin Slater
Chief Executive Officer, Digital Transformation Agency
Opening statement

Chair, I would like to make a brief opening statement.

I have been in this role for six months and have been spent considerable time meeting with hundreds of people across government and in the private sector — to listen, learn and discover, and to build relationships.

I've also spent time making changes to the agency to better align our work to the government's key objectives, which are to:

- digitise more services
- improve the user experience for individuals and businesses, and
- improve the return on ICT and digital investment.

With these objectives in mind, we focus our work on those areas that are the most important and have the greatest impact.

We provide advice to government to ensure it's making the right ICT investment decisions – that it's investing in those areas that will deliver benefits and outcomes to the public and better services at lower cost.

Once those investment decisions are made, we have a role to work with agencies to help them set up their major ICT projects for success.

This includes helping them to apply agile project methodologies, to focus on user needs, ensure the right technologies and platforms are being used, that they're leveraging existing platforms and avoiding duplication, moving to cloud, and getting the vendors with the right capability in.

Our role to deliver quality digital products that can be used across government remains an important aspect of this work.

And finally, we undertake ongoing monitoring of the ICT portfolio. We provide advice to government – to inform its decision making – about how major ICT projects are performing, managing risks and delivering on intended benefits.

I would now like to touch on some of the key whole-of-government priorities we are working on.

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Last week we released a private beta of the Govpass technology platform, which is a critical initiative that will give people the option to create a digital identity so they can more easily access government online services.

We are currently trialling the technology and we anticipate testing it more broadly next year.

We've also released the latest version of the rules and standards that will form a framework for a nationally-consistent approach to digital identity. We are currently consulting with government, industry and privacy groups on this and we'll shortly be releasing it for broader public comment.

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The second focus of work I'd like to share with you is our responsibility for ICT procurement, including setting up and managing ICT coordinated procurement arrangements.

This is designed to simplify, consolidate and coordinate ICT procurement across government and deliver significant savings.

For example, a new strategic arrangement with SAP was announced last week. Under the deal, we negotiated significantly discounted pricing for commonly used products and services. All agencies will benefit from the same discounts and reduced administrative burden.

We have also completed a review of how government undertakes ICT procurement. Based on the review findings, we have established a cap to limit ICT contracts to a maximum of \$100 million and/or three years' duration. The intent of this cap is to benefit small and medium enterprises who will now have the opportunity to bid for smaller individual components of larger projects.

We are continuing to work with industry and government on more reforms to improve coordination and reduce duplication of ICT products and services across government, as well as identify new ways to make the procurement process quicker, easier and more cost effective.

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Our new investment oversight and advisory role of major government ICT projects is another key piece of work we are doing.

It is providing some important early insights to government about where its major ICT investment is being directed and how major projects are tracking against their intended delivery schedule and benefits.

Just six months into this work, we have established a good baseline of information that we can continue to build on as we collect more detailed information about major projects.

We've identified 72 projects that fall within the scope of being above \$10M and we are engaging actively on 17 of these.

Separate to these insights, we have also provided advice to government on 16 new ICT project proposals to help with their investment decision.

This oversight and provision of advice is the first of its kind for the government and the emerging insights highlight the importance of the DTA playing this central advisory role.

As we continue to collect and analyse information, we'll also gain a stronger understanding of the priority areas for skills uplift in the public service so we can improve how projects are managed and increase the likelihood of them succeeding.

Which brings me to the fourth key area of focus I'd like to talk about – building digital capability.

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It's crucial that public servants are well placed to deliver and support the government's digital transformation ambitions.

One example of our work in this area is with the Australian Public Service Commission to design training programs to upskill the public service. These will help to attract and retain digital talent across government, provide digital training to agencies, and deliver a digital transformation leadership program to senior public servants.

We're continuing to roll out Digital Service Standard training across the public service, which sets out best practice guidelines for building government services that are simple, clear and fast.

We're bringing in fresh talent to the public service through the whole-of-government ICT entry level programs that we now manage. We expect to place about 170 ICT graduates, cadets and apprentices in departments and agencies in the coming year.

We've also set aside space in our Sydney and Canberra offices where we can collaborate with the private sector and external experts, and offer agencies training and hands-on learning opportunities to transform government services using new approaches and methodologies.

I thank the senators for allowing me the opportunity to provide an opening statement.

I welcome your questions.