

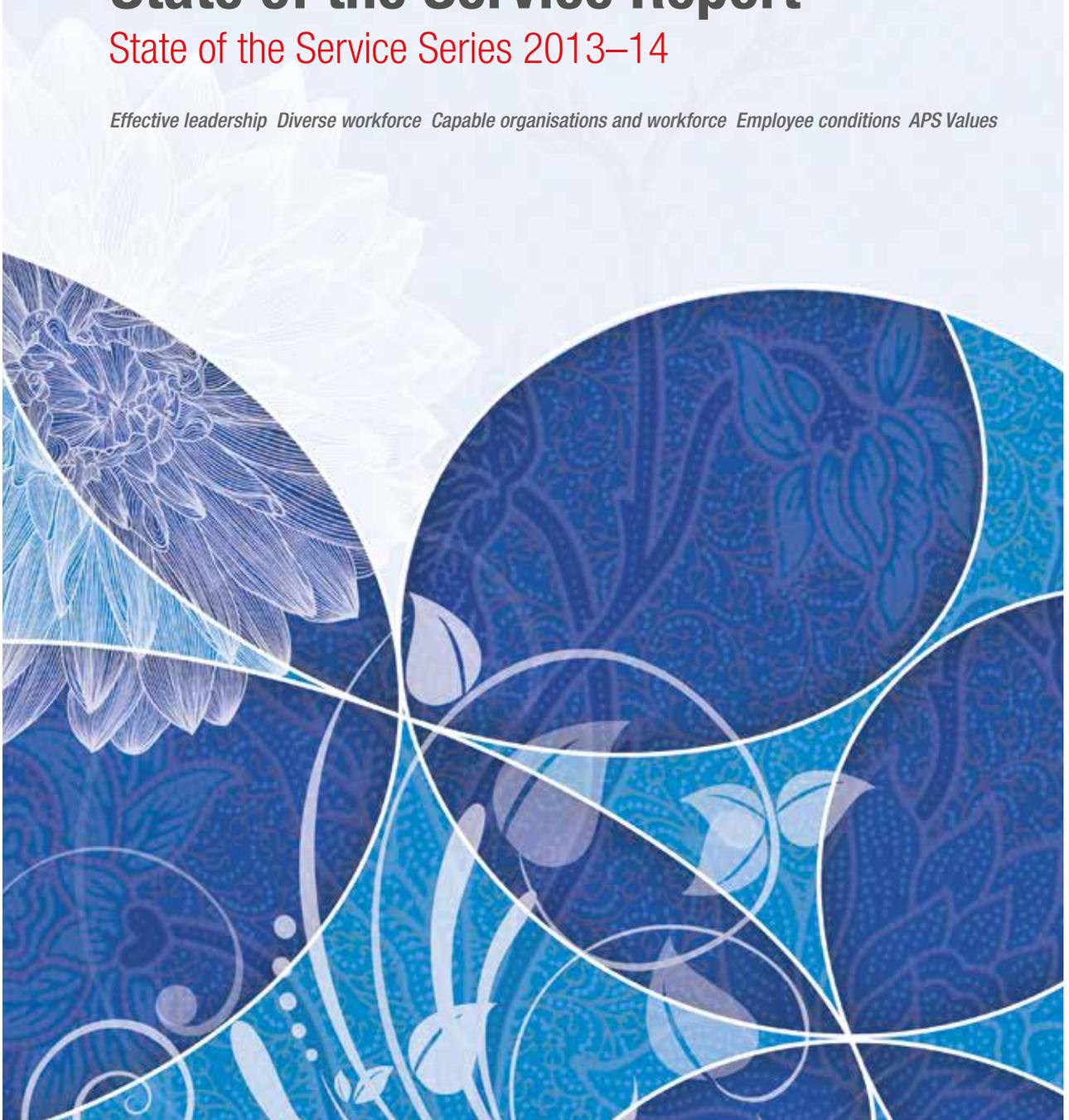


Australian Government
Australian Public Service
Commission

State of the Service Report

State of the Service Series 2013–14

Effective leadership Diverse workforce Capable organisations and workforce Employee conditions APS Values



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Using communications technology

Ongoing and rapid developments in communications technologies have the potential to impact both the way Australian Public Service (APS) agencies conduct their day-to-day business and the way they engage with clients and the community. A recent paper by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) concluded that while the communications benefits of social media are relatively undisputed, social media uses go far beyond just improving communications.¹ For example, benefits can be realised through using social media tools to re-think ways of providing information, delivering services, engaging with stakeholders, sourcing ideas and information, responding to requests, and collaborating with clients, citizens and the community.

The OECD highlights that social media can drive innovation in public service delivery and government operations, creating opportunities for new partnerships and collaboration. The same paper, however, also cautions that the use of social media by governments carries risk in terms of privacy, quality of information and public perception.

Many Australians are 'connected' by way of mobile technologies on an almost constant basis. With this comes an increasing expectation that they will be able to interact with government online or through mobile platforms, in the same way they connect with friends, family and private sector organisations. Improvements in technology continue to drive business opportunities. They change employee and client expectations and facilitate new and innovative approaches to work and the delivery of services. Advances in communications technologies, specifically social media, have the potential to reduce business costs, improve the quality of services and enable greater citizen and community engagement.

This chapter examines the state of the service in relation to how the APS is using social media to harness communication capabilities not available through more traditional channels, such as immediacy of information provision and receipt, and increased transparency and responsiveness. Although noting the risks associated with social media and the requirement for clear strategies and sound governance frameworks, this chapter emphasises social media as an enabler of organisational capability and client and citizen engagement.

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014, *Social Media use by Governments*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, France.

The changing nature of communication—current trends

Over the past decade the world has become increasingly connected. Internet technologies and products have sped the pace of globalisation. People, businesses and machines can communicate instantly—regardless of physical location. A 2009 report by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) highlights changes and trends in communications technology infrastructure.² These trends include:

- international developments in compression standards and encoding systems, enabling more effective delivery and efficient use of web-based content
- advances in computer processing power, allowing for the development of higher performance applications
- increased use of cross-platform media through internet protocol (IP)-based streaming to various platforms, meaning content is available instantly and to a multitude of consumers simultaneously
- developments in virtualisation and cloud computing, enabling remote storage and processing resources to be accessed at local levels
- increasingly sophisticated home and community networks linking the activities of daily life through wireless connections.

Additional important infrastructure developments include, but are not limited to, Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP), fixed and mobile broadband networks, mobile operating systems and an increasing array of open source software.

Similar advances in the development of web-based software applications, along with the growth in their use, continue to foster 24 hour, go-anywhere connectedness. For example, Facebook has more than one billion active users across the globe³ and the world's 271 million Twitter users send 500 million tweets per day.⁴ LinkedIn has more than 300 million members across 200 countries⁵ and, on 16 May 2013, Apple announced that customers had downloaded more than 50 billion unique applications (apps), averaging more than 800 downloads per second.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows that in 2012–13, 15.4 million Australians (83%) were internet users.⁶ Young Australians (15 to 17 year olds) were the most likely to use the internet (97%), while older Australians (65 years and older) were the least likely (46%). Social media was one of the most popular uses of the internet with 90% of 15 to 17 year olds and 92% of 18 to 24 year olds engaged in online social activity.

Public sector use of current communications technology

The OECD note that the current use of social media at national governments is largely one of 'laissez faire' and experimentation.⁷ While 26 out of the 34 OECD offices for the head of state

² Australian Communications and Media Authority 2009, *Trends in Communications and Media Technology, Applications and Use*, Australian Communications and Media Authority, Canberra.

³ Facebook, *About*, Life Events, Facebook, Menlo Park, California, viewed 10 October 2014, <<https://www.facebook.com/facebook/info>>.

⁴ Twitter, *About*, Company, Twitter, San Francisco, California, viewed 10 October 2014, <<https://about.twitter.com/company>>.

⁵ LinkedIn, *About Us*, LinkedIn, Mountain View, California, viewed 10 October, <<http://www.linkedin.com/about-us>>.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, *Household Use of Information Technology*, Australia, cat. no. 8146.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, viewed 10 October 2014, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/8146.0>>.

⁷ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014, *Social Media use by Governments*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, France.

or the head of government are on Twitter and 17 of 34 are on Facebook, only a small minority of countries reported they had a dedicated social media strategy (six of the 24 countries responding to the OECD's request for information, including Australia). Both the United States and United Kingdom public sectors employ social media as a function of their digital strategies and to engage and connect with citizens and communities.

The Department of Finance (Finance) website provides a link to an interactive mind map designed to help understand the Australian Government's data initiatives and policies landscape.⁸ This mind map includes links to digital communications initiatives and policies. For example:

- Australian Public Service Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy 2012–15 <www.finance.gov.au/policy-guides-procurement/ict_strategy_2012_2015>
- Gov 2.0 Taskforce Report (2009) <www.finance.gov.au/publications/gov20taskforcereport>
- Declaration of Open Government <www.finance.gov.au/blog/2010/07/16/declaration-open-government>.

In addition, the Government's E-Government and Digital Economy Policy, released as a pre-election commitment in September 2013, sets out the 'digital by design' public service of the future. The policy has a number of key objectives, including⁹:

- the development of efficient, cost effective, user friendly and personalised online services for citizen interactions
- the development of a digital service standard and a digital service design guide detailing how services will be developed, operated and maintained
- smarter ICT investment strategies and better reporting and accountability of ICT expenditure across government
- the availability of a digital mailbox for all government communications
- greater adoption of shared and cloud services
- improved ICT skills and support for the digital economy
- increased transparency and accountability of ICT projects in the public service through a public dashboard for government ICT performance and a league table of agency performance on online engagement, open data, platform-agnostic service delivery and user satisfaction.

While Finance and the Department of Communications (Communications) have a lead role in realising these objectives, agencies across the public sector are embracing new ways of thinking and employing communications technologies to great effect.

⁸ Waugh, P 2013, 'The Government Data Landscape in Australia', weblog post, 20 October, AGCTO, Department of Finance, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, viewed 19 September 2014, <<http://www.finance.gov.au/blog/2013/10/26/government-data-landscape-australia>>.

⁹ The Coalition 2013, *The Coalition's plan for the digital economy & e-Government*, Liberal, Barton, ACT, viewed 10 October 2014, <<http://www.liberal.org.au/latest-news/2013/09/02/coalition%E2%80%99s-plan-digital-economy-e-government>>. The key objectives have been taken from a recent speech by Chris Dale, Assistant Secretary of the Government Network Services Branch (Finance), to the CeBIT eGovernment Conference 2014; Dale, C 2014, *CeBIT speech eGovernment Conference 2014—Opening Speech*, Department of Finance, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, viewed 10 October 2014, <<http://www.finance.gov.au/blog/2014/05/07/cebit-speech-egovernment-conference-2014-opening-speech>>.

Department of Human Services: myGov



The myGov digital service is a four-year funded initiative (2012–13 to 2015–16) to improve people’s access to online services. It is rapidly becoming a critical element of the department’s digital service delivery strategy, providing Australians with easy, fast and secure online access to information and services across government agencies.

There are some 2.5 million active myGov accounts, enabling people to do their online business with Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support, the Department of Health (for the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record service), the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

An average of 5,600 new accounts is created daily. Some 100,000 people use the service every day, and this number is growing. Over time myGov will become a cornerstone of government service delivery to individual Australians.

A key aspect of the myGov service is to adopt a ‘known’ or ‘validated’ customer model with an associated user profile. The establishment of the myGov profile enables the name and date of birth of a person to be matched against agency records when they are linking their myGov services.

The profile service enables the person to use the ‘tell us once’ service which allows people to notify myGov of simple changes to their personal circumstances (such as name, address and contact details) and have the information automatically updated to their participating agencies.

Privacy and security matters are at the heart of the design of the service and are the subject of regular discussion between relevant officials involved in the myGov service. Personal information and letters are stored in agency systems and only presented in myGov. This enhances the security of the service by not creating a single repository of data and allowing the agency to maintain control over its customer records.

In 2013–14, 62% of agencies reported they had implemented strategies to move toward comprehensive digital information management systems in accordance with the Australian Government Digital Transition Policy. Twenty-three per cent of agencies reported they had implemented business processes that were fully digital, resulting in no paper records being created. Fifty-four per cent of agencies reported they had addressed an area of weakness identified through agency self-assessments.

Using social media

In 2013, 75% of agencies reported using some form of social media to support business outcomes.¹⁰ The most commonly reported tools were Twitter, Facebook and the use of blogs to share information and engage with the community. The ACMA report discussed earlier in this chapter highlights that the use of blogs as a way of exchanging information continues to grow, and that blogging has now become a mainstream element of social communication. This section looks specifically at the use of social media tools by APS agencies and the way these have been employed to benefit organisational capability and engage with clients and citizens.

Finance, through the data.gov.au website, hosts APS Twitter and Facebook leaderboards. The data included in these leaderboards was collected for use in the Cross Agency Social Media

¹⁰ This question was not asked in the 2014 State of the Service agency survey.

Forum (CASM). CASM is a collection of social media practitioners across the APS and the leaderboard data referred to includes a list of Twitter and Facebook accounts as known to the CASM group and its followers.

According to the APS Twitter leaderboard, as at August 2014, there were 169 Australian public sector related Twitter accounts, with the number of followers for each account ranging from 38 to 149,655. Of these, the @Australia (149,655), @TourismAus (49,876) and @dfat (29,266) had the largest number of followers. The Facebook APS leaderboard showed that, as at August 2014, there were 125 Australian public sector related Facebook accounts, with the number of likes per account ranging from 257 to 5,964,728. Of these, Australia.com (5,964,728), Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) (270,771) and Australian Army (231,549) had the highest number of likes.

APS agencies are using social media to accomplish a number of goals, such as:

- enhancing internal collaboration using internal social media platforms
- enhancing cross-agency collaboration using social media tools
- implementing social media as a customer service
- using social media to target and reach specific audiences
- leveraging social media to increase workplace productivity
- measuring performance through social media tools and metrics.

Enhancing internal and cross-agency collaboration

Social media platforms can be used to enhance internal collaboration, disseminate information throughout an organisation quickly and gain real-time feedback on proposed policies, initiatives and programmes. For example, the Department of Human Services encourages employee collaboration through various social media and networking tools, including an online news service through which employees can comment on and rate articles, SpeechBubble, discussion forums, a departmental wiki, Yammer and instant messaging.

Cross-agency collaboration can also be aided by the innovative use of social media tools, such as wikis, interactive blogs and message boards. The Australian Government collaboration tool GovDex (hosted by Finance) provides a useful example of such tools. GovDex is a secure online collaboration tool for APS agencies. It comprises a wiki, a task and issue tracker for project management and a discussion forum. Users can choose which of these they wish to use in engaging with their communities. By using social media tools such as GovDex, collaborative communities can span agencies, physical locations and time zones. People are brought together online to share information and ideas, schedule project tasks, and review and edit joint work and documents.

Service delivery and targeting specific audiences

One of the more common uses for social media tools and platforms is to enhance the customer experience and/or target specific audiences to provide or receive information. There are a large number of very good examples of this kind of use of social media tools across the APS including:

- Facebook, Twitter and an ABS smart phone app used to promote the availability of ABS statistics
- Australian Electoral Commission used Twitter and Facebook accounts to promulgate its messages and provide links to new material on its website
- Austrade used LinkedIn groups with a market and industry focus to facilitate information sharing on market conditions, emerging opportunities and related Austrade programmes and events
- Australian Public Service Commission (the Commission) used blogs to gain feedback on the *Public Service Amendment Act 2013* and changes to the APS Values and Code of Conduct.

Run by Finance, the Australia.gov.au website provides links to information and services on around 900 other Australian Government websites. It highlights particular areas of government online presence and promotes government social media profiles and mobile apps. Australia.gov.au is being redeveloped to improve its search and browse features and provide better access to the growing amount of government social media and mobile resources. The redevelopment will also improve its design to take better advantage of opportunities offered by handheld devices, integration of social media and apps.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics: Census of Population and Housing

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) relies on the willing participation or voluntary compliance of people across Australia to complete the Census of Population and Housing (Census) every five years. The ABS continues to rely on Australians to use Census data when released to achieve its mission—encouraging informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the community.



To support these objectives, the ABS needed to create long-term engagement with Australians through both the collection and dissemination phase of the Census.

To achieve this, the ABS embraced the use of social media tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, and developed two innovative, interactive gamification products—Run That Town and Spotlight 2.0.

The ABS' unique approach to social media and use of gamification, embraced Government 2.0 approaches by:

- assisting the public in understanding their role and contribution to the nation through participation in the Census
- providing an experience tailored to the individual or the characteristics they provided
- placing Census data in amusing and engaging contexts, combining humour with real-world scenarios
- requiring players to consider and use Census data to make informed decisions and achieve better outcomes for their community through gameplay
- integrating social-sharing elements, through Facebook and Twitter, of personalised infographics to encourage peer-to-peer communication about the Census.

Run That Town and *Spotlight* won the Government 2.0—Excellence in eGovernment Awards for two consecutive years.

Together, these products, along with the use of social media, demonstrate the new, innovative products and services being developed as part of the strongly evidence-based business and communications strategy currently being implemented by the ABS.

National Library of Australia: Australian printed ephemera

The National Library of Australia collects Australian printed ephemera as a record of Australian life and social customs, popular culture, national events and issues of national importance. The Library aims to collect federal election campaign materials as comprehensively as possible, including one copy of all published leaflets, handbills, posters, policy speeches, press statements, pamphlets, letters and reports to constituents, novelties and how-to-vote cards—that is, anything produced by individual candidates, political parties and lobby groups in the run-up to the vote. In previous years, the election collecting strategy was limited to individual letters sent to candidates and parties. In 2013, the Library employed varied communications channels, with a strong focus on social media, to seek community involvement in collecting federal election materials.

For the 2013 federal election, a focussed social media campaign was developed to complement pre-existing collecting strategies and expand the reach and accessibility of the Library's message, 'Wanted: Your 2013 Election Ephemera'. A media release, distributed through the Australian Associated Press, and a blog post were the campaign's foundation messages. The campaign used direct email and phone calls, traditional radio and print media, the Library's homepage carousel, its e-newsletter (sent to 42,294 subscribers), and social media, including blogs, Facebook (more than 28,952 people reached through organic and paid posts) and Twitter (more than 14,000 followers). These platforms were fuelled with content developed from across the Library, with the campaign staged progressively throughout the election. Stages of the campaign were targeted towards particular audiences, including the Australian Electoral Commission's official list of candidates. Lobby groups were targeted by addressing high-profile election issues through Twitter, as well as high-profile media, even Tony Abbott himself. Proactive communications were followed up by a reactive social media presence. The Library's use of #AusPol and #AusVotes enabled messaging to appear among general federal election conversations on Twitter, engaging a broader audience

than is represented in the Library's followers.

Third-party print media incorporated into the campaign included metropolitan, local and regional media. Library employees also assisted with campaign promotion through internal communication tools, Microsoft Lync and Yammer.

The campaign resulted in the highest yield of federal election material in the Library's collecting history. Early direct replies and positive responses from candidates helped with the immediate campaign and filled collection gaps from previous years. Media work and Twitter posts resulted in others taking up the cause, including Wil Anderson and the Gruen Team. ABC election analyst Antony Green promoted the campaign on his blog—and deposited his papers. A life-size Bob Katter cut-out was sourced through Twitter from Bruce Nicholson. Candidate for the Hume Electorate. Some election candidates targeted were found to be published authors leading to other collecting activities by the Library.

For the 2013 federal election, the Library's collection now holds more than 7,000 individual items filed into 945 categories and housed in 63 boxes. This represents a 40% increase on the previous election's collected materials and the highest harvest since the collection was first established in 1901. Statistically, there was a 10 to 15% increase in Twitter followers throughout this campaign, much higher than previous month-to-month figures.

The campaign also reached new audiences active in the political space and educated people about the Library's role as a collecting institution. It demonstrated an important opportunity for social engagement with the public and promoted a strong sense of community involvement.

For the Library, the campaign demonstrated the success and importance of collaboration through social media in collecting, preserving and sharing the history of Australia. Future historians will gain insight into the political landscape in 2013—how the election happened, what the important issues were, how the campaign was conducted (officially and unofficially) and who was active in the debate—and be able to compare it to Australia's political collection stretching back to 1901.

Increasing workplace productivity and measuring performance

Social media platforms and tools can be used to increase workplace productivity, through innovative and more efficient and effective ways of working. They also provide a unique perspective through which to measure agency and/or programme performance. The recent OECD report on government use of social media (referenced previously in this chapter) highlights that social media provides organisations with real-time policy and programme feedback and input, allowing them to crowd-source ideas for service design, improve work processes and facilitate emergency response and intervention. The report further notes that, in using social media in this fashion, public sector organisations have the opportunity to experiment with, evaluate and adjust ideas to make quick evidence-based decisions designed to meet client and customer expectations and requirements.

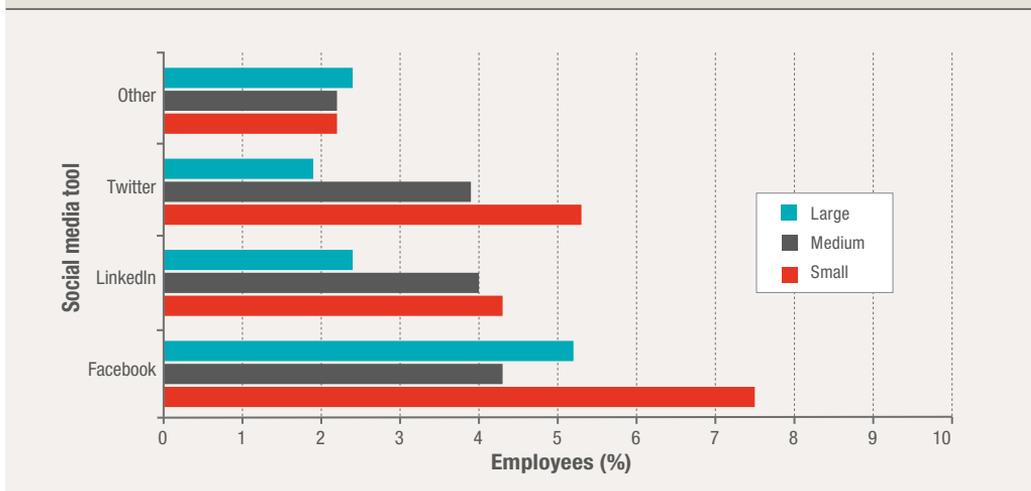
The employee experience

Results from the 2014 APS Employee Census (employee census) demonstrate that the majority of APS employees do not use social media for work purposes (88%). Given the relatively large amount of public sector related websites, Facebook and Twitter accounts, this result suggests that as an organisational tool social media is being used for specific purposes within the APS, rather than being employed more broadly.

Employees from small and medium agencies were fractionally less likely than their counterparts in large agencies to report they did not use social media for work purposes (88%, 89% and 92% respectively). Figure 4.1 shows Facebook was the most common social media tool used by APS employees for work.

Figure 4.1. Employee use of social media for work purposes by agency size, 2014

Source: Employee census

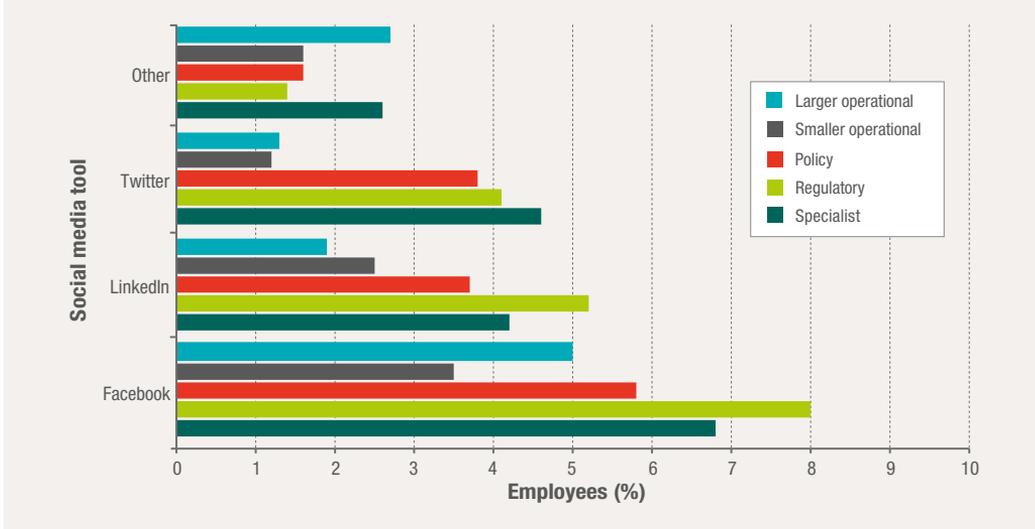


Employees from smaller and larger operational agencies were the most likely to report they did not use social media for work purposes (94% and 92% respectively), with employees from specialist agencies the least likely (88%). Figure 4.2 shows the social media tools used by

agencies by functional cluster. As with the data by agency size, Facebook was the most commonly employed social media tool. Regulatory agencies were the most likely to use Facebook and LinkedIn, while specialist agencies were the most likely to use Twitter to engage with the community.

Figure 4.2. Employee use of social media for work purposes by agency function, 2014

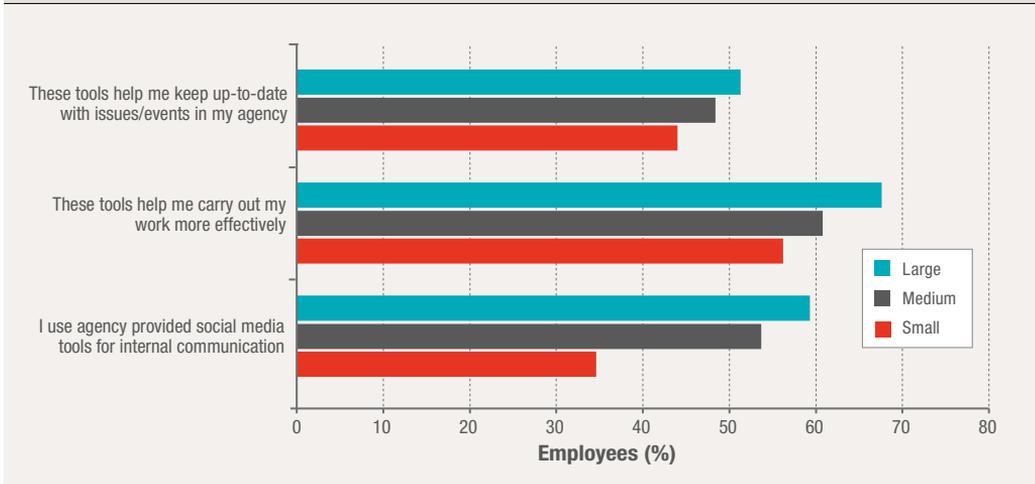
Source: Employee census



A majority of APS employees reported they had access to internal social media or networking tools to communicate with others in their agency (58%) and most agreed these tools helped them to work more effectively (67%) and keep up-to-date with events and issues relevant to their agency (51%). Figure 4.3 shows these results by agency size.

Figure 4.3. Employee use of social media for internal communication by agency size, 2014

Source: Employee census



While small agencies were more likely to make use of social media to engage with external audiences (through tools such as Facebook and Twitter), large agencies were more likely to use them to aid internal communications (through internal agency social media tools). Employees from large agencies were also the most likely to agree they found the use of agency-provided social media tools effective.

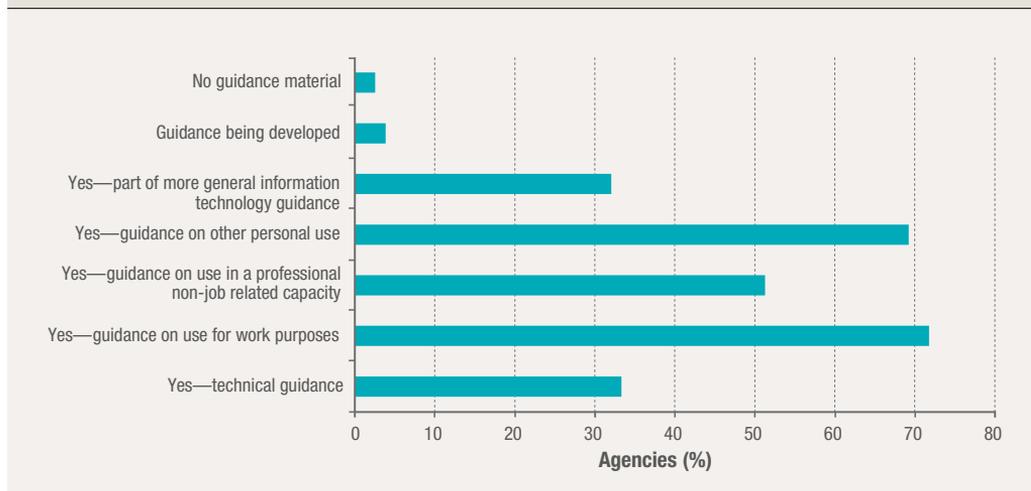
Risk, accountability and governance

To effectively use social media tools and platforms, APS agencies must ensure they have clear overarching strategies and sound governance structures. Agency requirements such as an ICT and/or social media strategy, appropriate policies and guidelines for use, established protocols for record keeping, risk identification, management and mitigation procedures, and plans for monitoring and evaluating outcomes, are key.

The State of the Service Agency Survey (agency survey) asked agencies to report on the guidance material provided to their employees on the use of social media and networking tools. Figure 4.4 shows that the majority of agencies provide guidance material for employees on the use of social media and networking tools for work (72%), personal use in a professional capacity (51%) and for other personal use (69%).

Figure 4.4. Agency guidance on using social media and networking tools, 2013–14

Source: Agency survey



The National Archives of Australia: Social media as government records



The National Archives of Australia (the Archives) is responsible for ensuring Australian Government agencies meet records management obligations under the *Archives Act 1983* to support government accountability, as well as the preservation of and access to valuable government records that reflect Australia's cultural heritage.

Since 2011, the Archives has been leading the implementation of the Australian Government's Digital Transition Policy which aims to move agencies to digital information management for efficiency purposes. This includes ensuring that records created digitally, whether in business systems, dedicated records management systems, or even on social media platforms, can be preserved for accountability purposes or for access by future generations of Australians.

The *State of the Service Report 2012–13* indicated that 75% of Australian Government agencies are using social media to support business outcomes. The most commonly reported tools were Twitter, Facebook and blogs. Additional channels included YouTube, LinkedIn and webcasts.

Maintaining important information in social media environments can be challenging as they are third-party owned and often hosted in the Cloud. Most user agreements for social media platforms indicate that no responsibility is taken for preserving content placed on a platform by users. Left to itself, social media content will not survive forever—worryingly, it may not survive to be accessible under legal discovery—in fact it may not even survive to contribute to the annual report.

As the lead agency for information management in the Australian Government, the Archives take an exemplar approach to ensuring that social media is 'on the record'. This includes:

- its corporate plan acknowledging the importance of information in supporting an accountable, efficient and effective government
- its information and records management strategic framework recognising information and records

as a key business asset, and a corporate resource that is fundamental to the Archives' governance

- its information management strategy incorporating social media in its scope
- its social media policy including a requirement to manage social media as a record
- practical procedures being available to assist employees in capturing social media records.

The Archives engages with the public on a number of social media platforms including Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube. Records of this engagement are captured in its corporate records management system using a range of approaches including taking screenshots, saving email notifications, and maintaining a spreadsheet of approved posts.

The Archives' Forced Adoptions History Project provides an interesting example of social media as government records. In March 2013, the Archives was tasked with developing a website, exhibition and education programme to increase awareness and understanding of experiences of individuals affected by forced adoption practices. In the early stages of this project, a Facebook page was established to identify people who had been affected by the practices and policies of forced adoption in Australia and encourage sharing of experiences. Given the sensitive nature of the issue, some inappropriate comments that did not meet the stated 'rules of engagement' were posted on the Facebook page. Although these comments were removed, in line with the terms of the Facebook page, a copy of the comments was captured in the Archives' corporate records management system.

Keeping a record of social information exchanges ensures that the Archives is accountable and maintains transparent business processes, even when working in dynamic social spaces. And while not everything can or should be kept forever, records of higher value will be preserved for future generations of Australians, long after the social media platforms themselves have disappeared.

Personal use of social media by APS employees

The APS Values encourage APS employees to engage effectively with the community and provide clients with appropriate information. Social media provides APS agencies with a quick and popular means for facilitating this engagement. At the same time, however, employees must remain mindful of the limits on their ability to disclose information under legislation such as the *Privacy Act 1988* and Public Service Regulation 2.1, and of the requirement to act in a professional manner in all dealings.

The use of social media and online networking tools by APS employees outside of work continues to be a matter of uncertainty for some agencies and employees. Enquiries to the Ethics Advisory Service indicate that some employees are uncertain about the connection between work and the requirement to uphold the APS Values, the integrity and good reputation of their agency and the APS and, in particular, what this means for their use of social media. The dismissal of an employee of one APS agency for using Twitter to criticise colleagues is one example, although it is equally clear from matters coming before the Fair Work Commission and the courts that this issue arises for employers and employees in different sectors of the economy.

Many agencies have developed social media policies to provide clarity on this. The Commission also provides advice to agencies and employees on the considerations that apply when employees make public comment in a private capacity, including online. Given the popular use of social media with young Australians, having induction programmes in place for graduates and other new entrants that articulate APS behavioural expectations and the potential agency reputational risks associated with the personal use of social media by APS employees is key.

The majority of employee census respondents indicated their agency provided a specific social media policy on the private use of social media by APS employees (72%). This is consistent with results from the 2014 agency survey, where 69% of agencies reported they provided guidance to their employees on how to represent themselves using social media for personal or home use (excluding in a professional capacity).

A substantial proportion of employees, however, did not know what material their agency provided (23%). Ten per cent reported their agency provided formal training on the personal use of social media and a small proportion (3%) indicated they were not aware the APS Values and Code of Conduct applied to the private use of social media.

Maintaining an online presence and making comments online is a common practice in the Australian community. Like other citizens, APS employees make public comments on, for example, social networking sites, blogs and online news sites. Interaction between the private lives of APS employees and their work can be complex. APS employees are citizens and members of the community, but the right to serve the community as APS employees comes with certain responsibilities. These responsibilities include maintaining the confidence of the community that the APS can deliver services on behalf of the government professionally and impartially.

The same principles apply to online comment as to any other kind of public comment—as do the APS Values, Employment Principles and Code of Conduct, including Public Service Regulation 2.1 (duty not to disclose information).

What does this tell us about the state of the service?

Changing communications technologies have facilitated new and innovative approaches to how APS agencies engage with their employees and the Australian community. The ‘digital by design’ public service of the future will facilitate the development of efficient, cost effective, user-friendly and increasingly personalised online services.

APS agencies currently use communications technologies, and social media and networking tools specifically, to enhance internal and cross-agency collaboration through the use of tools such as those that enable instant messaging and online discussion. APS agencies continue to employ advances in communications technology to improve their customer service and target and reach specific audiences. Initiatives such as myGov have a profound impact on how the Australian community accesses and interacts with government services. Social media is also being used by APS agencies to increase workplace productivity and measure performance. The varied use of communications technology and social media and networking tools by the Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museum sector highlight their applicability to the public sector.

Issues of risk and accountability require solid governance and reporting frameworks, including the policies and processes to support this. Guidance for employees in their use of social media, whether it be for work or personal use, are generally available and the work being undertaken by Finance and Communications to implement the Government’s E-Government and Digital Economy Policy provides a framework for smarter ICT investment strategies and better reporting and accountability of ICT expenditure across government. Given the popular use of social media with young Australians, having induction programmes in place for graduates and other new entrants that articulate APS behavioural expectations and the potential agency reputational risks associated with the personal use of social media by APS employees is key.

Social media use within agencies, however, appears to be largely the function of specialised areas rather than being employed more broadly. The use of Facebook as the social media tool of choice highlights the conservative nature of government engagement in this space. While the case studies and data presented in this chapter demonstrate that APS agencies are engaging with emergent communications technology, there remains scope for increasingly innovative approaches.