THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

POSTERA CRESCAM LAUDE

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Bachelor of Arts

Trust in the Australian Government Through Digital
Transformation

This report has been written for The Future of Work Lab by

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ABOUT THE INTERNSHIP

The Future of Work Lab hosts talented Master's student interns who lead projects across a range of future of work issues. The interns produce policy reports covering pressing and timely topics in this area. Our interns are trained in advanced analytical, research and report-writing skills as well as collaboration, teamwork and interpersonal skills.

Arthur Spirason is an Intern at the Future of Work Lab. Arthur is currently completing a Bachelor of Arts at The University of Melbourne majoring in Politics and Philosophy. He is interested in the evolving role of Australia's government and public sector and his project with the Future of Work Lab seeks to explore the various aspects of the Australian government's Digital Transformation Strategy, including its potential opportunities and risks.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACCC   Australian Competition & Consumer Commission

ACIC   Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission

AFP   Australian Federal Police

ANAO   Australian National Audit Office

ANU   Australian National University

APS   Australian Public Service

ATO   Australian Tax Office

CARC   Community Affairs References Committee

CCA   Competition and Consumer Act 2010

CDR   Consumer Data Right

CO   Commonwealth Ombudsman

CPI   The Centre for Public Integrity

DATA   Data Availability and Transparency Act 2022

DHA   Department of Home Affairs

DTA   Digital Transformation Agency

FOI   Freedom of Information

ICAC   Independent Commission Against Corruption

ICT   Information and Communications Technology

OAIC   Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

OECD   Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OPG   Open Government Partnership

PC   Productivity Commission

PM&C   Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet

UN   United Nations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Government is in the midst of implementing a digital transformation strategy that seeks to recast and digitalise the role of government as an adaptation to the emerging digital economy. The digital transformation of government is often touted as a means of improving trust in government, along with the citizen-government relationship more broadly, through the commonly stated aims of increased transparency and citizen participation. These attempts more often than not fail to meet their goals, however, as is also the case with digital transformation attempts in the private sector. Digital government initiatives have also been criticised in many cases for reinforcing existing power structures and relationships rather than transforming them, with a typical focus on technological improvements rather than genuine transformations of the citizen-government relationship.

This paper examines how a digital transformation of government could overcome the likelihood of failure by enacting principles of transparency and accountability, along with the meeting of citizen expectations, which were found to have positive associations with the genuine transformation of government and subsequent levels of trust in government. These principles were derived from a first of its kind empirical study undertaken by Mahmood (2019), alongside relevant academic literature and the stated goals of both digital government transformations and the Open Government Partnership. They are then applied to the Australian Government's digital transformation strategy and its recent track record in matters of transparency and accountability.

Despite echoing aspirations toward these respective principles, the Australian Government has a troubling recent record of breaking and actively undermining them. They are also set to possess enhanced powers of surveillance and disruption over the digital lives of citizens as the strategy is put into place, potentially amplifying the power asymmetry of the citizen-government relationship instead of transforming it. In order to balance out increased powers and a poor track record of self-management, independent mechanisms to ensure government transparency and accountability are proposed. Intra-term government KPI reviews are also introduced as a potential means of gauging citizen expectation between elections, which may serve to enhance the dialogue between citizens and government.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Whilst definitions of digital transformations vary, a comprehensive review on the literature has described the process as one that "aims to improve an entity by triggering significant changes to its properties through combinations of information, computing, communication and connectivity technologies" (Vial 2019, p. 118). It has been a phenomenon actively explored throughout the private sector in recent years, as companies have sought to exploit digital technologies to their advantage by way of the productivity improvements, cost reductions and innovative change that they, at least in theory, can provide (Hess et al., 2016).

In spite of this promise, however, a McKinsey & Company (2018) report stated that over 70% of digital transformation attempts surveyed in the preceding years had failed to meet their stated goals. Similar results arose from a Boston Consulting Group study in 2020 of nearly 900 clients and survey respondents, with 70% admitting a failure to meet target value and create sustainable change through attempted digital transformations (Forth et al., 2020). These failures have been commonly attributed to inadequate levels of employee engagement, collaboration, management support and accountability, along with the fact that sustaining transformational change often requires a major shift in mindsets and behaviours, which can be difficult for leadership to instil (Bucy et al., 2016).

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF GOVERNMENT

Digital transformations have also been increasingly pursued by the world's governments amidst a perceived digital darwinism, which has only accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic (Eggers et al., 2021). Digital transformation of government initiatives can be seen as successors to the e-government initiatives that sprung up from the mid-1990s, seeking to utilise ICT to improve government services and increase public engagement (Gong et al., 2020; Gunawong & Gao, 2017; UN, 2020). Both terms have continued in use, often interchangeably, yet digital transformation is a more recent phenomenon for governments, associated with larger change programs that intend to transform the citizen-government relationship and the functions of government itself, as opposed to the mere provision of online information and transactions for example (Morgenson et al., 2011; Omar et al., 2020; Waller & Weerakkody, 2016). A global survey by Deloitte in 2021 found that 75% of government workers were expecting further digital transformation changes over the next 5 years within their organisations, yet 60% did not believe the fast pace of these technological changes to be a good thing (Eggers et al., 2021).

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Trust in public institutions has been convincingly argued as integral to the functioning of society, as it allows for governments to implement policies and deliver services, as well as improving compliance with regulations and fostering optimism in democracy (Bean, 2015; Perry, 2021). However, declining and general low levels of trust in public institutions have been observed internationally over the preceding decades, particularly in advanced and liberal democracies (Gunawong & Gao, 2017; Morgenson et al. 2011; Teo et al., 2008). This
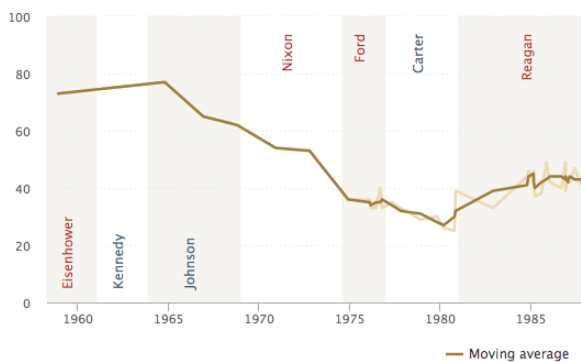
can be witnessed to some extent across figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: Percentage of the population across three regions with confidence or trust in their national Government or Parliament
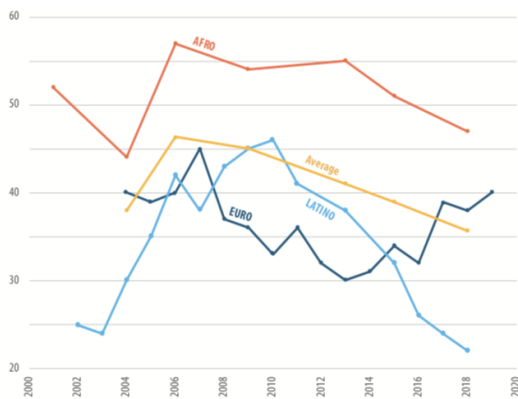
Note: From *Trust in public institutions: Trends and implications for economic security,* Perry, 2021, p. 2.

Figure 2: Public trust in government: 1958-2021 (USA)

Note. From *Public Trust in Government: 1958-2021,* Pew Research Centre, 2022.

Large amounts of money have been spent on e-government initiatives around the world, in part to try and rebuild trust within the citizen-government relationship, yet a majority of these initiatives have ultimately been judged complete or partial failures (Anthopoulos et al 2016, p. 162; Mahmood 2019, p. 97). The rate of failure is most pronounced in developing countries, with a mere 15% of e-government projects successful in achieving major goals without any significant undesirable outcomes (Gunawong & Gao 2017, p. 154; Teo et al. 2008, p. 100). A wide range of factors have been attributed to specific e-government failings at the pre-completion stage, such as design-reality gaps, unclear objectives and issues relating to content, skill and execution, as well as in the post-completion stage, relating to issues of politics, education, project management, security and privacy among others (Anthopoulos et al 2016, p. 164).

There are also growing concerns over the potential for data misuse in digital government programs. Datafication has emerged as a new paradigm in science and society, which refers to the transference of social action into quantified data, allowing for real-time tracking and predictive analysis (van Dijck, 2014). The profiteering from this phenomenon in the private sector has given rise to the terms data capitalism and surveillance capitalism, following the likes of Google and Facebook collecting and selling user data as predictive products to advertisers, the consent mechanisms of which are often buried deep within lengthy user agreements (West, 2019; Zuboff, 2019). The power asymmetry that emerged in favour of those with access and the means of interpreting the vast amounts of circulating consumer data remains of great concern, and tech platforms have been found to have already shared user data with government agencies over a number of years (van Dijck, p. 197; West 2019, p. 23).

If surveillance capitalist logic were to pervade further into the public sector under the guise of smart governance, citizens would become increasingly transparent to the state, whilst the

activities of the state became further hidden behind opaque technological barriers (Jorgensen, 2021). There have already been a number of cases in which governments have perpetuated nonconsensual data overreach through digital programs, most prominently via the increased monitoring and tracking of low income groups to determine the welfare status of individuals and families (Eubanks, 2017; Jorgensen, 2021). Automated government systems have led to tragic cases of false positives for punitive measures, as well as false negatives for welfare eligibility, which could have further devastating consequences if similar error-prone systems were rolled out economy-wide. Whilst the implementation of these systems may have been generally well-intended, these failures nevertheless highlight the ongoing limitations of automated systems in handling complex and sensitive social situations at scale. These failures have also been attributed to a typically narrow focus on technological improvements over genuine transformations of government, which has been argued to reinforce existing power structures and relationships rather than changing them for the better (Bannister & Connolly 2011, p. 137; Mahmood 2019, p. 4). However, a genuine transformation of the citizen-government relationship, beyond the techno-centric approaches to service delivery undertaken thus far, has been theorised as having the potential to reverse the trends of declining trust in government (Bannister & Connolly, 2011; Mahmood, 2019; Waller & Weerakkody, 2016).

CASE STUDY: TRUST IN GOVERNMENT THROUGH DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION (KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN)

Mahmood (2019) undertook a first of its kind empirical study into the relationship between the digital transformation of government and citizen trust and confidence in government. It sought to address the identified research gap surrounding this relationship through data collection from participants in the Kingdom of Bahrain, supported by an analysis of relevant academic literature (Mahmood 2019, pp. 51-71). Five factors were hypothesised as influencing a genuine transformation of government based on the literature, which were e-government, technology, citizen expectation, transparency and accountability (Mahmood 2019, p. 100). Genuine transformation was hypothesised to influence government performance, which would then go on to influence citizen satisfaction and ultimately citizen trust in government (Mahmood 2019, pp. 39-47)

The meeting of citizen expectations, along with the practising of transparency and accountability, were found to have significant positive effects on perceptions of transformation, which confirmed for the researcher the necessity of their consideration in any transformation attempt (Mahmood 2019, pp. 105-106). Both e-government and technology, however, were found to have a significant negative effect on perceptions of transformation, which was interpreted to mean that e-government services and technological improvements alone were insufficient for a genuine transformation of government to take place (Mahmod 2019, pp. 102-105). A genuine transformation, considering the five aforementioned factors, was shown to have a significant positive effect on government performance, which in turn positively influenced

citizen satisfaction, which then positively influenced trust and confidence in government (Mahmood 2019, pp. 106-108).

Further study would be required in order to more accurately assess attitudes toward government transformation and trust in other locales, yet this research serves as a promising first step, especially given that transparency, accountability and the meeting of citizen expectations were found to be key positive factors in both academic literature and empirical research regarding the relationship between digital government transformation and trust in government. It would therefore prove a worthwhile consideration for governments, following further local investigation, to prioritise the implementation of transparency and accountability measures, along with the means of assessing and meeting citizen expectations, within any plans for digital transformation. Government adherence to these principles, alongside the intrinsic social value, could also be expected to increase engagement with, and thus the effectiveness of, digital government services.

AUSTRALIA'S DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

The Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) was created in 2016, with the aim of entirely digitalising government services (Abbott & Turnbull, 2015; Barbaschow, 2016). This followed Australia's commitment to the Open Government Partnership (OGP) the previous year, boasting ambitions toward a more transparent, accountable and participatory government as one of now 77 national government members from across the world (PM&C, 2022; OGP, 2022). The DTA (2018) later put forward a vision for a world-leading

digital government by 2025 through the *2025 Digital Transformation Strategy*. Three strategic priorities were showcased in the document, encompassing ease of use, user-informed services and digital capability (DTA 2018, p. 13). A number of government strategies have since been published, combining to form an overarching vision for a digitalised Australian government and economy as seen in figure 3. As a present attempt at digital transformation of government, it would be worthwhile noting the extent to which transparency, accountability and citizen expectation are given explicit focus as a means of achieving genuine transformation and boosting citizen trust.

Figure 3: The Policy Landscape
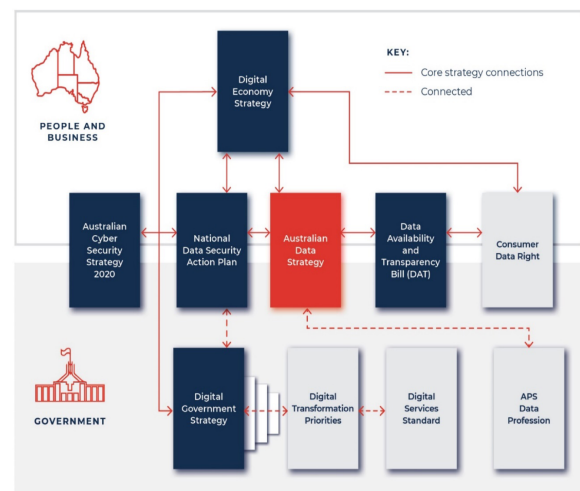
Note. From *Australian Data Strategy* (p. 7), PM&C, 2021a.

Refer to Table 1 in Appendix

Within these documents, there has been a general acknowledgement and commitment, primarily in principle, to transparency and accountability. Citizen expectations have also been engaged to some extent through public consultation processes, as well as through the pursuit of service improvements to match the private sector. What remains lacking though are specific measures through which the

transparency and accountability of government can be enforced, along with the means of assessing and adhering to citizen expectations once these strategies are in place. To make a better judgement on the capacity of the Australian Government to self-manage their adherence to these principles, we must look to the current levels of government trust in Australia, as well as the government's own track record in these matters.
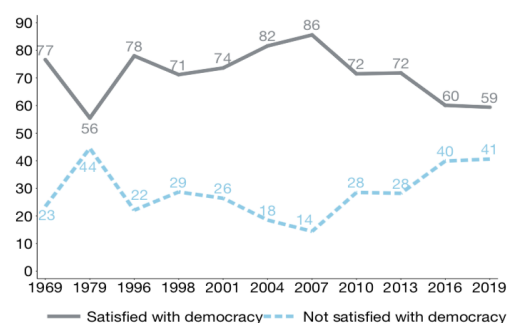
TRUST IN THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

It is difficult to separate party politics from the umbrella term of government, as departments execute policy and service delivery dictated in significant part by cabinet and party strategy. Specific failures may be attributed to Ministers and the governing political party independently of departmental personnel or systems, and vice versa. However, due to their interconnectedness, and since digital government transformation seeks to realise whole-of-government changes, Australia's government in this case may be thought of as the governing political party operating in concert with the APS in carrying out the overall functions of government. The establishment of the DTA in 2016, and all subsequent action up until the May, 2022 federal election thus encompasses the intentions and outcomes of Coalition and APS collaborations at federal level, along with the ideological and political beliefs that may skew citizen trust either positively or negatively in response.

A major study of the 2019 federal election found that satisfaction in democracy was down 27% from a highpoint in 2007 as seen in figure 4; a steeper decline than that recorded in the UK following Brexit and in the US following the

election of Trump. Trust in government was also at its lowest ever point recorded in electoral studies, with only 25% agreeing that people in government could be trusted, as seen in figure 5 (Cameron & McAllister 2019b, p. 99).
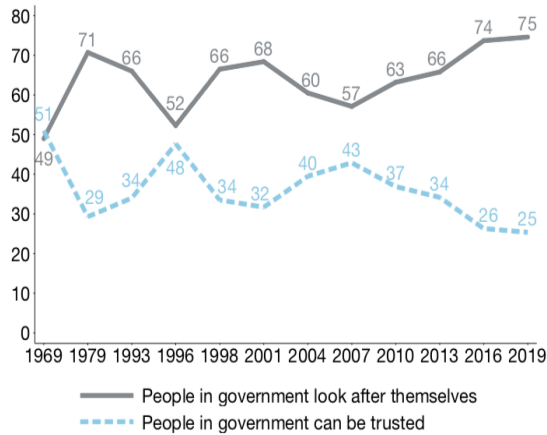
More recently, according to Edelman's annual report on institutional trust in Australia, levels of government trust recorded a boom during the pandemic in 2021, from 44% to 63%, yet witnessed a sharp drop again in 2022, from 63% back down to 52% as witnessed in figure 6. While the drop was significant, the 2022 figures still remain higher than those recorded by Edelman from 2012-2020. Prior to this potential pandemic trust bubble, Australia sat in the vicinity of the OECD average within the 30-50% range according to OECD data, as seen in figures 7 and 8. However, government in Australia is still perceived as far less competent and ethical than businesses and NGOs, as witnessed in figure 9. An increase in trust levels would no doubt enhance the citizen-government relationship and assist in the uptake and effectiveness of new digital government services, particularly if Australia wishes to remain a world leader amongst digital governments with far higher levels of citizen trust, such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden (OECD, 2022b).

Figure 4: Satisfaction With Democracy
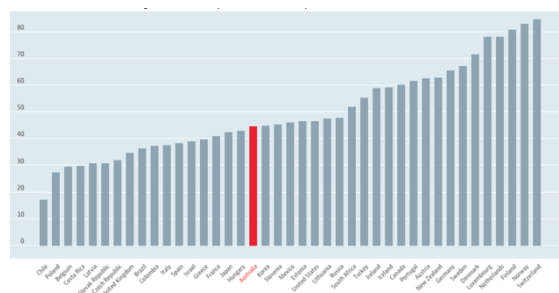
Figure 5: Trust in Government

Note: From *The 2019 Australian Federal Election: Results from the Australian Electoral Study,* Cameron & McAllister, 2019a, p. 15.

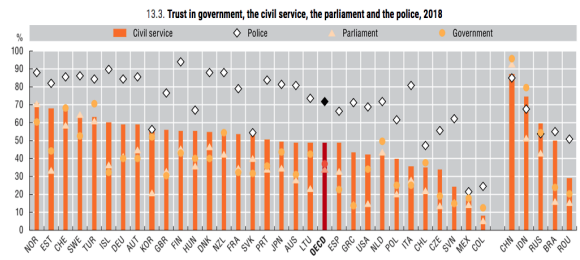**Figure 6:** Trust in the Australian Government

Note. From *Edelman Trust Barometer 2022: Australia Country Report,* p. 8.

Figure 7: Confidence in national government (Australia: 44%)

Note: From *Trust in Government*, OECD, 2022b.

Figure 8: Trust in government, the civil service, the parliament and the police (2018)

Note: From *Trust in Public Institutions,* OECD, 2022c.

Figure 9: Competency and ethical scores of institutions

Note. From *Edelman Trust Barometer 2022: Australia Country Report,* p. 30.

TRACK RECORD IN TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Rudd government, upon taking office in 2007, introduced a number of measures to enhance transparency and accountability, including bolstered APS whistle-blower protections, as well as enhancements to the *FOI Act 1982* (Cth) and the Ministerial ethics and lobbying codes of conduct (CO, 2009). The pursuit of these measures also led to the creation of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013*, designed to protect public officials who observe and report wrongdoing within the public sector (CO, 2015). While this may have presented a good look, the Australian Government has since failed to uphold these

principles on multiple occasions, at times actively undermining them when disclosed wrongdoing was perhaps at its worst and of greatest public interest.

Close to $3 million has been spent by the Australian Government since 2018 pursuing whistle-blowers in court who have respectively released information on Australian espionage in Timor-Leste, Australian war crimes in Afghanistan and aggressive debt collection schemes carried by the ATO (Knaus, 2020). Secrecy measures were imposed upon these trials and collaborating journalists were subjected to raids by the AFP (Ananian-Welsh, 2020; Pender, 2021). This goes along with a failure by successive Australian governments to offer support for Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, an Australian citizen who has faced human and legal rights abuses following his outlet's exposure of US military war crimes, along with numerous other leaks published on its website (Williams, 2019). The actions, and lack thereof, from governments involved in this case set a troubling precedent for journalism, which ought to possess the capacity to expose government wrongdoing as one of its core functions, serving as a societal mechanism for government transparency and accountability (Dawson, 2020; Risen, 2021).

Another means of assessing the government's adherence to these principles lies in its response to FOI requests from citizens. The central goals underpinning the original formation of the FOI Act in Australia included the enhancement of transparency within the policy making process, as well as the increased effectiveness of the democratic process through an informed public, both of which are consistent with the general aims of the OGP

and digital government transformations (OAIC, 2022b). A 2019 Guardian Australia investigation found that refusals of FOI requests were at their highest (17%), and the proportion of requests being granted in full was at its lowest (50%) since the OAIC began publishing data in 2010-11, along with commonplace delays and failures to meet statutory deadlines (Knaus & Bassano, 2019). This has been followed by a 39% increase in FOI complaints from 2019-20 to 2020-21 (OAIC 2021, p. 12).

The Morrison Coalition government announced plans for a federal ICAC to investigate political corruption prior to the 2019 election, yet its proposed Commonwealth Integrity Commission faced strong criticism for being the weakest watchdog in the country by far, and legislation was never put before parliament (CPI, 2021; Gordon, 2022). The continued failure to implement a federal ICAC coincided with the release of findings on the very same government's channelling of public funds towards ineligible development projects in marginal seats prior to the 2019 election, labelled the sports and car park rorts respectively and leading to multiple Senate inquiries (Karp, 2020; Ng, 2021). The incoming Labor government has publicly supported an adequately empowered ICAC, and so it remains to be seen whether this mechanism will be successfully realised at federal level in the coming years (ABC News, 2022).

CASE STUDY: THE INCOME COMPLIANCE PROGRAM (ROBODEBT)

The Income Compliance Program, or Robodebt as it became known, was an expense measure established in the 2015-16 budget by then Social Services Minister Scott Morrison, which

sought to utilise automated processes to identify and recover overpayments to income support recipients (CARC 2022, p. 3). It utilised averaged income data from the ATO to estimate debts owed, and reversed the onus of proof onto citizens, pursuing them via private debt collection agencies in many cases when evidence had not been provided otherwise (CARC 2017, pp. 1, 3). With eventual proven error rates of at least 20%, an estimated $1.73 billion in illegitimate debt had been raised against 433,000 Australians (CARC 2017, pp. 1, 32-34). After ultimately being ruled illegal, through enforcing the repayment of debt in the absence of evidence, the Australian Government agreed to a $1.8 billion settlement for the victims (Carney, 2019; Henriques-Gomes, 2021). The scheme caused widespread anxiety, depression, stress-related illness and fear amongst victims, who were largely within a vulnerable demographic already, along with at least two suicides directly linked to the ordeal (CARC 2017, pp. 36-40; CARC 2022, pp. 13-14). A costly endeavour, both financially and socially, the Robodebt scheme exemplifies a recent failure in digital government service, along with an illegal enforcement of the failed system's findings, causing great social harm. The lack of transparency and accountability from the government in relation to these events has also been directly linked to an erosion of public trust observed throughout the Senate inquiry (CARC 2017, p. 39; CARC 2021, pp. 17-19).

MEETING CITIZEN EXPECTATIONS IN AUSTRALIA

Federal elections remain perhaps the sole mechanism through which the meeting of citizen expectation can be judged with direct consequence. This however remains an ineffective method of assessing government performance on specific issues as they arise. Opinion polls have been utilised to this effect in Australian political life as a means of gauging public opinion, yet this method comes with inherent limitations, including limited sample sizes and potentially uninformed or ambivalent respondents (Grant, 2004; Rhodes, 2022). Opinion polls have also been linked to destructive effects on political leadership, since they have become news stories in themselves and a driving factor behind the numerous recent changes in party leadership at the national level (Cook, 2018). They do however remain a useful tool in determining public sentiment, and have been theorised as reflecting the quality of information and clarity of political alternatives available to respondents (Key 1966, pp. 2-3). If a system were in place to adequately inform respondents on key issues and have them assess government performance accordingly, it may provide a more accurate and insightful measure of public opinion and aid in the transformation of the citizen-government relationship.

CONCLUSION

The Australian government has a troubling recent record of broken commitments to principles of transparency and accountability, which does not bode well for a successful transformation of government. It is also set to possess unprecedented power over the digital lives of citizens through enhanced surveillance and disruption powers. It has been found to have acted illegally and misused citizen data within the Robodebt scheme, and this follows a concerning pattern displayed by governments internationally regarding digital welfare

programs. Transformation of the citizen-government relationship is therefore of utmost importance in order to balance the government's failure to self-manage transparency and accountability, in combination with the inherent power asymmetry that exists between governments and citizens. The establishment of independent mechanisms to ensure government transparency and accountability, along with improved means of measuring citizen expectation, could therefore go a long way towards a genuine transformation of government and the subsequent improvement of trust in government in Australia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. An expanded undertaking of Mahmood's 2019 empirical study into how digital government transformation could improve public trust in government in Australia. This could seek to engage a larger number of participants and test a broader range of hypotheses to better gauge Australian attitudes.

2. The establishment of an independent body to oversee government adherence to principles of transparency and accountability. This could be incorporated as a function of the federal ICAC that may yet be established in the coming years, and include unambiguous and enforceable rules on data access, usage and surveillance within the digital economy. Citizen participation in the establishment of this independent body could serve to meet citizen

expectations alongside principles of transparency and accountability.

3. Intra-term government KPI reviews from citizens could be introduced as a more focused and insightful class of opinion poll to assess citizen expectation. Citizen perceptions of transparency and accountability could be measured in light of relevant information having been made available to respondents, and citizen participation could be incorporated into the development of critical success factors, around which the KPI framework itself would be built (Parmenter 2012, pp. 85-103). The Productivity Commission at present releases annual reports on the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of government services in Australia, which include KPI frameworks and results (PC, 2022). An annual citizen expectation report could therefore be considered as a complementary document, serving to enhance the ongoing dialogue within the citizen-government relationship. The UK government, as a current transparency measure, publishes KPI reviews on the vendors of its most important contracts, yet KPI reviews of governments themselves from citizens would constitute a further step towards government transformation, which to the author's knowledge has not yet been implemented in any official capacity (Cabinet Office, 2022).

4. A Public Interest Committee, similar in concept to that of the OECD, could be

assigned the role of determining what public sector data ought to be made available in the public interest as a general rule, with perhaps only certain data remaining unpublished as a justified exception (OECD, 2022d). The OAIC, ANAO and CO exhibit aspects of this function to some extent already, yet a specialised entity may be required to handle the public sector data generated within the digital economy. Relevant data could be published immediately, with annual summaries included in the citizen expectation report.

APPENDIX
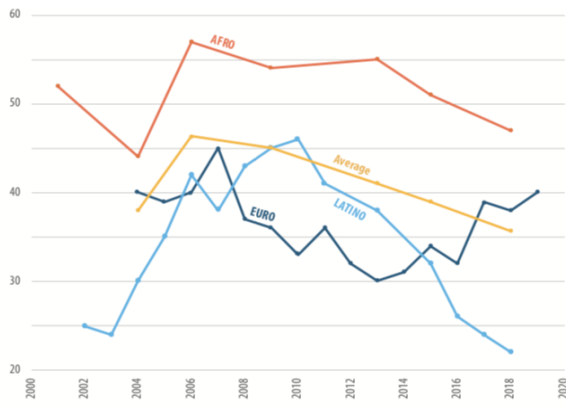
Figure 1: Percentage of the population across three regions with confidence or trust in their national Government or Parliament

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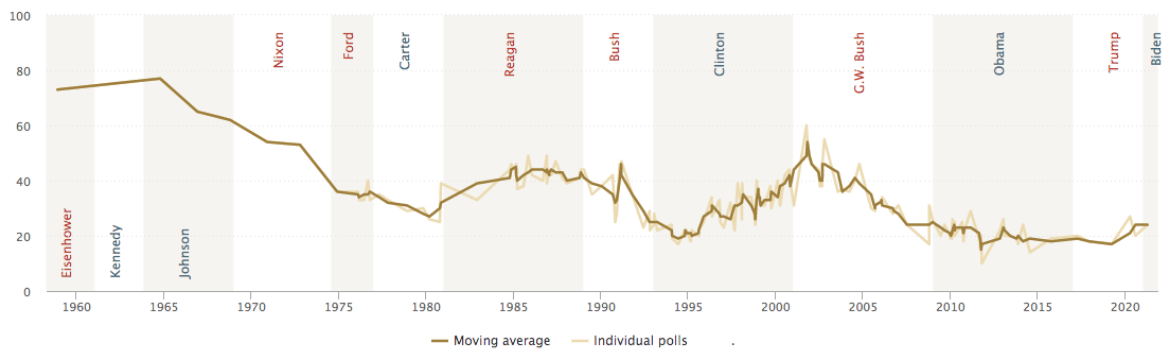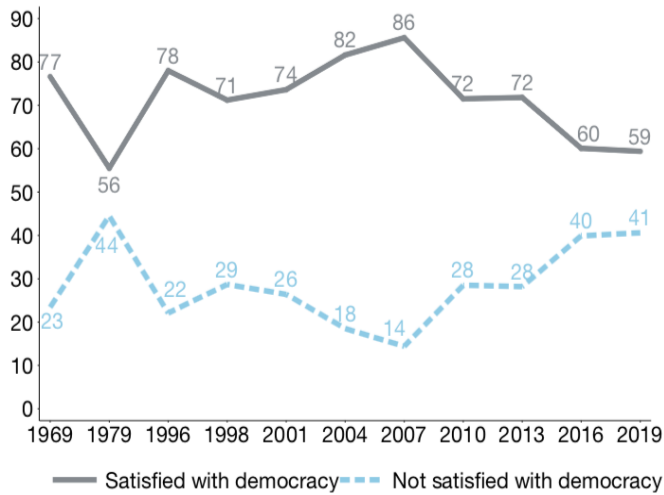

Figure 2: Public trust in government: 1958-2021 (USA)

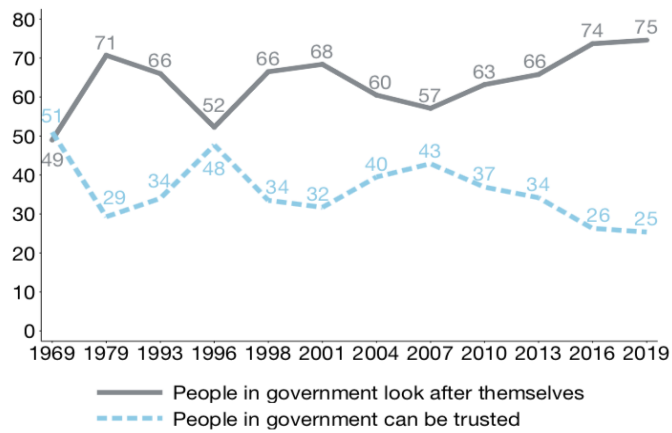Note: From *Public Trust in Government: 1958-2021,* Pew Research Centre, 2022.
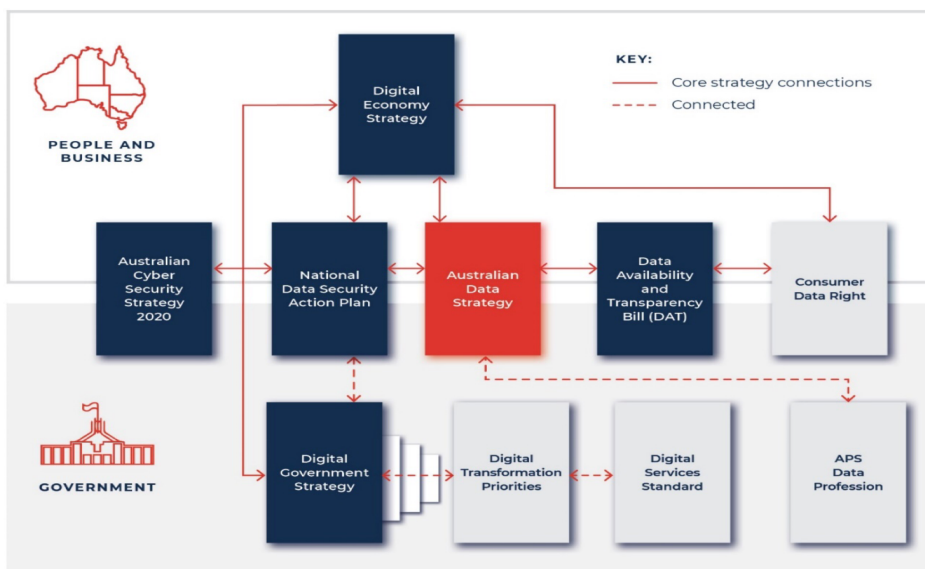
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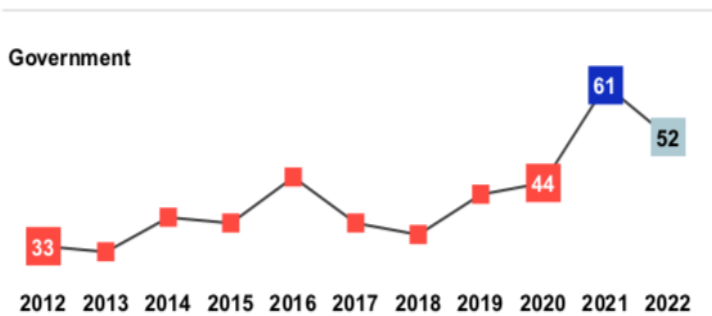Note: From *Australian Data Strategy* (p.7), PM&C, 2021a.

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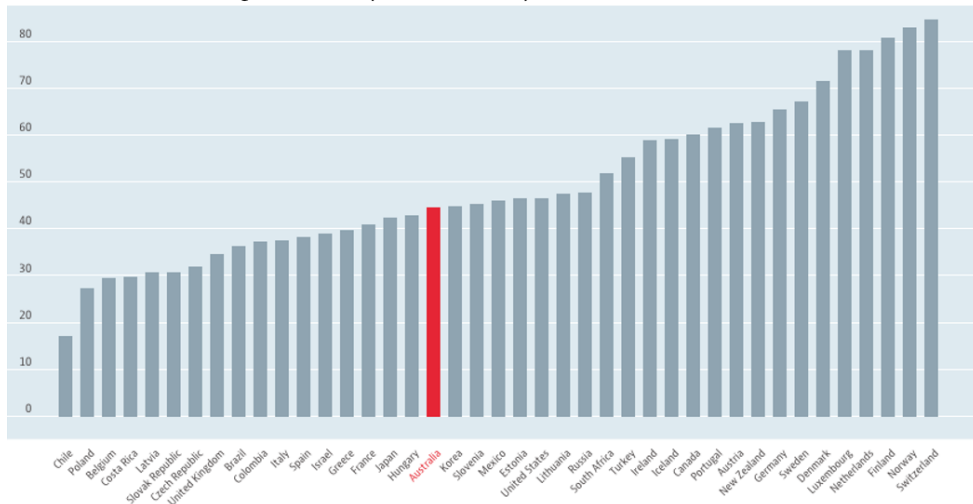
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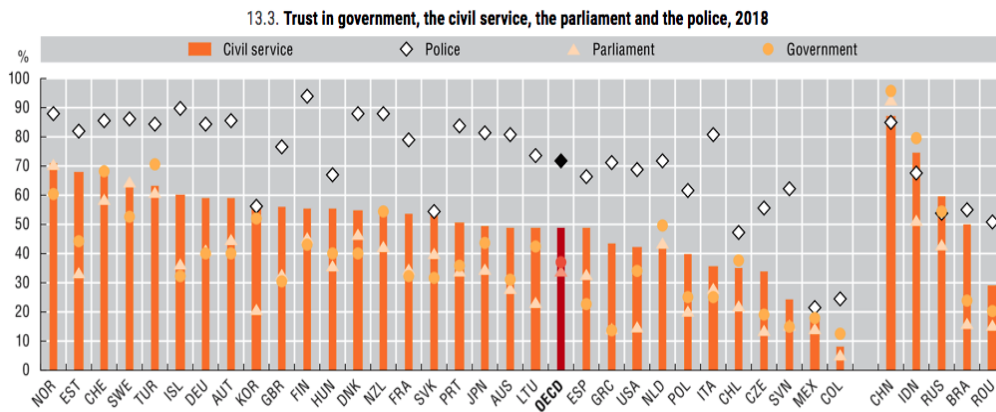
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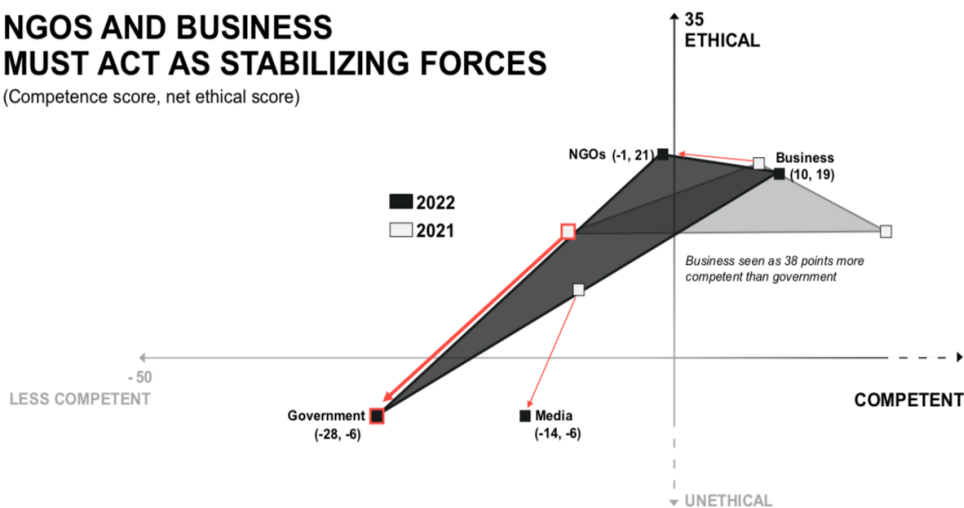**Figure 9:** Competency and ethical scores of institutions

Note: From *Edelman Trust Barometer 2022: Australia Country Report,* p.30

Digital Government Strategy	Outlines the ways in which the APS will be transformed as a digital workplace. Increased public participation and trust are among its stated aims (DTA 2021, pp. 6-9, 19). Citizen expectation is briefly addressed, with citizens said to expect an equivalent ease of use, personalisation and digital service from their government as they do from the private sector (DTA 2018, p.4; DTA 2021 p. 2). Transparency is also listed as a core principle of the strategy, yet nothing is provided as to how transparency and accountability will be practised (DTA 2021, pp. 12, 14).
Digital Economy Strategy	Seeks to establish the foundations of a world leading digital economy by 2030, which includes investments in digital infrastructure and workforce, along with having 100% of government services available online in order to adapt to and support new and evolving technologies (PM&C 2021b, pp. 2-3, 10-11, 25). A central aspect of this strategy overlaps with the *Australian Data Strategy* regarding goals to unlock the value of data through the use, movement and custodianship of both public and private sector data (PM&C 2021b, pp. 4, 21).
Australian Data Strategy	Sets the foundations for the Australian Government to maximise the value from data as a means of growing the economy (DTA 2021, p. 6; PM&C 2021a, p. 5). It emphasises new value being created the more that data is shared between the public, private, research and non-government sectors, as it can then be utilised to build a clearer picture of Australians and their needs (PM&C 2021a, pp. 8-28). Secretaries from all departments committed to upholding the principles of transparency and accountability in 2019 (PM&C 2021a, p. 33). Chief Data Officers are being appointed across government agencies to be responsible for data use and management, whilst data asset inventories are being developed to improve transparency (PM&C 2021a, p. 44).
National Data Security Action Plan	Currently under development along with industry whilst submissions continue to be received from the public (Andrews, 2022). The plan ultimately intends to deliver a set of data security expectations and requirements for governments, businesses and individuals, with data once again framed as a strategic asset for Australia's national interests (DHA 2022, pp. 2-3). It will operate alongside the *Cyber Security Strategy* as a security foundation for the *Australian Data Strategy* and the *Digital Government Strategy,* which in turn serve to enable the *Digital Economy Strategy* (DHA 2022, p. 14).
Data Availability and Transparency Act 2022 (DATA)	Establishes a procedure for the sharing of public sector data by its custodians to accredited users, overseen by a National Data Commissioner and facilitated by accredited intermediaries (DATA, pp. 5-14). It was a key reform, along with the *Consumer Data Right,* proposed within the Productivity Commission's (2017) *Data Availability and Use* report, which sought to maximise value from available data through a sharing process that could also serve to build public trust. The bill went through a public consultation process before being passed in April, 2022 (PM&C 2021a, p. 27).
Australia's Cyber Security Strategy	Sets out the Australian Government's plans for protecting the users and infrastructure of the digital economy going forward, which includes a number of investments in digital security measures along with increased powers for law enforcement agencies operating online (DHA 2020, pp. 7-9). This includes the capacity for the AFP and ACIC to modify citizen data and take over the online accounts of citizens in order to disrupt criminal activity (DHA, 2021). While this is intended to build trust in the online world by protecting against threats, it has the potential of amplifying the citizen-government power asymmetry within it as well.

Table 1

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