

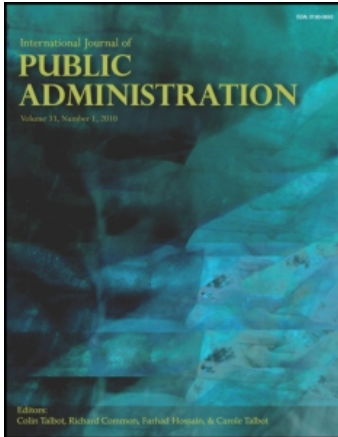
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You Win Some, You Lose Some: Experiments with Joined-Up Government

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You Win Some, You Lose Some: Experiments with Joined-Up Government

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In 2004 a bold experiment in the use of joined-up approaches to policy-making and implementation, best captured in the design of new policy architecture and the creation of a co-location model for service delivery, was undertaken to address the entrenched disadvantage of Indigenous Australians. In this article we report on *inhibitors*, explaining the under-performance of the joined-up experiment, and *facilitators*, which explain, in part, the existence of a small number of examples defying the broader trend.

Keywords: joined-up government, whole of government, service delivery, inhibitors and facilitators

INTRODUCTION

Attempts at joined-up government (JUG) are now commonplace, but examples of successful implementation remain elusive. In this context we report the findings of a bold experiment with JUG in Indigenous affairs in Australia, and explain how, within a broad context of JUG under-performance, a small set of highly successful examples emerged. In doing this we provide insight into the complexity of joining-up in practice.

The first section provides an overview of the prospects and imperatives for joining-up and a brief discussion of the conditions necessary for successful approaches; the second section sets out the Australian experience with a specific discussion of the major experiment in Indigenous affairs; the third section explains the creation of Indigenous Coordination Centers (ICCs) and reports the main findings; the final section draws on these findings to make some broader points about the prospects and pitfalls for JUG.

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JOINING UP TO ACHIEVE GOVERNMENT GOALS

It has been argued that the topics of how to join-up across government organizations and across the government, private and non-government sectors, represent the “most-discussed questions involving the performance of public institutions and achievement of public purposes” (Kelman, 2007:45). Certainly there has been substantial attention to the practice and study of these phenomena over the last decade or so with many variants emerging: for example, collaborative government in the United States and whole-of-government in Australia. Among these various terms, however, are common practices and a fairly inclusive definition is adopted here where joined-up government is “the bringing together of a number of public, private, and voluntary sector bodies to work across organizational boundaries towards a common goal” in various forms, including realignment of organizational boundaries, formal partnerships, and informal partnership (National Audit Office, 2001:1). In our brief review we do not seek to provide an in-depth discussion, rather a short entrée into the broad field that has emerged, to pinpoint

- (i) the main prospects and imperatives for joining-up; and,
- (ii) critical enablers of effective JUG.

JUG has been viewed as a mechanism for increasing coordinated thinking and action (Pollitt, 2003) and it is easy to understand why this has been attractive to governments across the world. Various writers have pointed to JUG as a mechanism to leverage resources and capitalize on synergies across organizations (Pollitt, 2003; Kelman, 2007; Cortada et al, 2008), while others have noted how more joined-up approaches may enhance efficiency, effectiveness, or service quality (Pollitt, 2003; Entwistle & Martin, 2005). Some posit JUG-style approaches are *modus operandi* for 21st century governance—a means of tackling complex or wicked problems (Breul & Kamensky, 2006; Australian Public Service Commission [APSC], 2007; Christensen & Laegreid, 2007; Cortada et al, 2008; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007).

The question of whether JUG is a response to an old or new problem has sparked an interesting debate. One group arguing it is a new approach to the old problem of coordination (Perri 6, 1997; Kelman, 2007; Ling, 2002), while another has positioned it as the means to address the problems of disaggregation which occurred during new public management reforms (Christensen & Laegreid, 2007; Talbot & Johnson, 2007; Williams, 2002). Nevertheless, there is no doubt that experiments with joining-up “proliferate across the policy landscape” (Williams, 2002:103) and the language of joining-up has become part of 21st century public management.

A review of the literature also offers up a range of factors which enable an effective implementation of JUG. We will provide a brief overview here to frame the later discussion but point readers to an extensive review provided in O’Flynn, Halligan, and Blackman (2010). Several writers have identified the “must haves” of JUG, providing some guidance to the supporting architecture required. Aligning cultures, incentives, systems, and aims were critical in Ling’s (2002) overview, while Pollitt (2003) argued long-term relationships to facilitate skill development and trust, a selective application and cooperation were important. Parston and Timmins (1998) pointed to several necessary conditions: a focus on measurable outcomes, a consensus to operate and “break the rules” to enable innovation, new incentive and reward structures, and explicit responsibility for delivering outcomes vested in an individual.

Bardach’s (1998) work on inter-agency collaboration and the development of his craftsmanship theory is also instructive. He argues that inter-agency collaborative capacity is created by purposive practitioners who bring together public spiritedness, creativity, and collaboration to create value. These actors are able to overcome a range of constraints through the strategic and judicious use of resources and opportunities. Crafting successful collaborations requires the development of high quality operating systems which are

flexible, accountable, performance-linked and which can be used to acquire resources. Bardach (1998) also highlighted the importance of creating a steering process and nurturing a culture of trust and joint-problem-solving. Together with the previous points we can see that there are several supporting conditions required for the successful implementation of JUG in practice. In the following section we discuss the Australian experience of JUG.

THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE OF JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT

As with many countries, Australia has placed considerable emphasis on a more joined-up approach. The broad ambitions and aspirations were captured in the *Connecting Government* report released in 2004, which placed a joined-up approach at the centre of how the national government sought to operate and introduced the uniquely Australian term “whole-of-government” (WG) (Management Advisory Committee [MAC], 2004). There was some history of attempts at joined-up approaches in Australia already, but the report sent a clear message that there was a desire to expand the scale and scope of it, while developing and embedding a more collegial and collaborative way of working in the Australian Public Service (APS).

In a speech introducing the report, the Secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet stated that government organizations needed to find new and better ways of joining-up to deliver on governmental goals: “whole of government is the public administration of the future . . . [the means] to face the governance challenges of the 21st century” (Shergold, 2004).

There are many reasons that we should work in a whole of government way. Not least is the fact that every major challenge of public administration . . . necessarily requires the active participation of a range of central and line agencies . . . The report does not believe that effective solutions lie in moving around the deckchairs of bureaucratic endeavor. Rather it reinforces the need to continue to build [a] culture that supports, models, understands and aspires to whole of government solutions. (MAC, 2004:v)

The *Connecting Government* report focused on driving change across structures, systems, skills, and cultures to ensure that the APS was more supportive of WG; it acknowledged several major impediments such as existing accountability and budgetary mechanisms, as well as information and communication technologies. While enacting these changes would prove a major challenge, there is no denying the commitment to it at the political and senior administrative levels. At the political level, for example, instances of effective WG in areas such as national security, counter-terrorism, and pandemic preparedness are evident. Cabinet processes were amended to facilitate WG,

new inter-departmental taskforces were created and the Council of Australian Governments¹ was reinvigorated. At the administrative level new coordinating units were set up within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to build linkages between strategic policy making and implementation, new approaches to integrated service delivery were canvassed, and a lead-agency model was developed to assign primary responsibility to a single department as JUG projects took off. Such changes fit well with the enablers of JUG discussed in the previous section. While noting widespread experimentation during this period, we focus specifically on Indigenous affairs given the large-scale transformation which was attempted.

Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: A Wicked Problem Looking for a Joined-Up Solution?

The issue of Indigenous disadvantage was a prime opportunity for experimenting with joined-up approaches. In a speech launching *Connecting Government*, the Secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet signaled the bold ambitions in this policy domain:

Now comes the biggest test of whether the rhetoric of connectivity can be marshaled into effective action. The Australian Government is about to embark on a bold experiment in implementing a whole of government approach to policy development and delivery . . . and the embrace of a quite different approach to the administration of Indigenous specific programs and services. (Shergold, 2004)

For decades Australian governments have experimented with policy approaches in this area, yet significant and persistent gaps remain between the socio-economic outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations despite substantial expenditures — estimated at \$A3.5B at the national government level in 2007–08 (Australian National Audit Office [ANAO], 2007). Indicators across a range of areas paint a bleak picture: life expectancy at birth is 20 years lower for Indigenous Australians; infant mortality rates are double those for the non-Indigenous population; Indigenous primary school students have lower levels of numeracy and literacy, secondary school students have lower completion rates and university enrollments are around half those of the broader population. Labor force participation rates trail, with unemployment rates triple those for the non-Indigenous population, while rates of suicide, homicide, hospitalization for assault, and incarceration all exceed the broader population (Prime Minister of Australia, 2010; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2003).

Estimates of the time to close these gaps offer little hope with one study suggesting it would take *at least* 100 years to equalize labor force participation rates, median personal

income, home ownership rates, and male life expectancy at birth (Altman, Biddle, & Hunter, 2008). This picture has fuelled considerable policy experimentation and has positioned Indigenous disadvantage as a wicked problem primed for a joined-up solution: “Indigenous disadvantage is an ongoing, seemingly intractable issue . . . The need for coordination and an overarching strategy among the services and programs supported by the various levels of government . . . is also a key ingredient” (APSC, 2007:2).

A radical new approach to Indigenous affairs was heralded by the election of the Liberal-National government in 1996, but it was not until 2004 that bipartisan agreement was reached to undertake the massive institutional and policy reforms to enable this. The reform agenda was encapsulated in the Indigenous Affairs Arrangements which sought to “provide high-level stakeholder involvement through a Ministerial Taskforce, a framework for departmental collaboration . . . and on-the-ground through a network of Indigenous Coordination Centers” (ANAO, 2007:12). The first step was taken in 2005 with the dismantling of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission² and the transfer of service delivery to mainstream departments and programs.

The second step was the creation of the Ministerial Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs, comprising Ministers with day-to-day responsibility for programs and services aimed at Indigenous Australians, which was given the task of setting long-term strategic policy goals. The Secretaries’ Group on Indigenous Affairs was established to support these goals and implement decisions of the taskforce; it was given formal responsibility for driving reforms related to the new arrangements. The group noted early on that the success of these reforms rested on an ability to work in a more collaborative joined-up fashion (Secretaries’ Group on Indigenous Affairs [SGIA], 2005). The Secretaries’ Group was supported by the Indigenous Communities Coordination Taskforce, responsible for leading coordination across various departments and jurisdictions, and the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) responsible for coordinating WG activity, developing community engagement strategies, overseeing inter-governmental relationships, and monitoring performance (see KPMG, 2007).

As the policy architecture transformed, inspiration for a new way of working on-the-ground was taken from an experiment begun in 2002 under the auspices of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The “COAG Trials” were undertaken in eight sites and sought to get government agencies to work together effectively and foster partnerships with Indigenous communities. These partnerships were mediated by a controversial mechanism — Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) — essentially quasi-contracts between

¹The forum for inter-jurisdictional cooperation and negotiation which includes the Prime Minister, state Premiers, and territory Chief Ministers.

²A representative body for Indigenous Australians and a major provider of services to Indigenous communities.

Indigenous communities and government.³ The trials provided opportunities to experiment with new approaches, more tailored to community needs, with a heavy emphasis on reducing red tape and increasing innovation. Evaluations of the trials pointed to some success, but reported entrenched barriers preventing the effective operationalization of the model. Several of the critical ingredients for success seemed to be missing; for example, shared objectives and priorities, skills for cross-boundary working, and new leadership styles (Morgan Disney & Associates, 2006). The trials were an important introduction to a more joined-up approach in Indigenous affairs, producing important lessons for those charged with redesigning the policy and delivery architecture that would begin in the mid-2000s.

EMBEDDING JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT: THE CASE OF INDIGENOUS COORDINATION CENTRES

The COAG trials represented the first big test in operationalizing JUG in Indigenous affairs in Australia and they formed the genesis for the creation of what would become the permanent hubs for policy coordination, service delivery and community engagement, ICCs. These centers provided a site to examine both the prospects and pitfalls of JUG, especially as designers had the benefit of lessons from the COAG Trials to guide them.

ICCs⁴ were set up in 2004 as a “bold experiment” in the new approach to Indigenous policy (Shergold, 2004) and as a vehicle for “local responsiveness, community-based innovation and negotiation” (SGIA, 2005: v). Thirty multi-agency ICCs were initially established in urban, rural, and remote areas of Australia, bringing together multiple departments in a co-location model overseen by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). These centers were to be one-stop-shops, portals into government for Indigenous Australians. Staff came from a range of Departments following a process of “mapping” staff working in Indigenous areas into mainstream departments. There were instances where state and territory governments were also represented. By 2006

some 562 staff members from the Commonwealth government were placed in ICCs and they were carrying out three main roles: program administration, solution brokering to provide a bridge between community needs and the various programs offered by departments, and developing SRAs with local communities (ANAO, 2007).

ICC Managers were identified as the lynchpin in the experiment (SGIA, 2005) and their original duty statements set out broad-ranging duties and expectations including: leading, monitoring, and supporting the overall functions and performance of the ICC; oversight of day-to-day operations; managing relationships with program departments to ensure cohesion; inspiring a sense of purpose and direction; nurturing relationships; steering change; marshalling expertise, and negotiating persuasively. A series of evaluations of the ICC model have pointed to a range of challenges echoing those from the COAG Trials, indicating that major barriers have not been broken down (ANAO, 2007; KPMG, 2007; Morgan Disney & Associates, 2006). The cumulative effect of these reports was to signal that, on the whole, the ICC experiment had not been successful given the bold ambitions of its creators and that systemic issues had not been addressed.

Despite the boldness of this experiment there has been remarkably little empirical research into the relative success of it. Our study therefore was largely exploratory, adopting a case study approach which enabled us to examine the joined-up phenomena *in situ* (Creswell, 1994; Leedy & Ormond, 2005; Lofland, 1971; Yin 2003a; Yin 2003b). Such an approach is considered superior when “researching relationships, behaviors, attitudes, motivations, and stressors in [an] organizational setting” (Berg, 1998:218) and produces rich data on human interaction (Bailey, 1992; Cottone, 2007).

Our discussions here draw on extensive analysis of public and internal documents and a series of interviews of head office and ICC staff. Thirty-seven separate interviews, involving forty-five participants,⁵ were undertaken in 2009, transcribed, and then analyzed around key themes: the interviewees’ conceptualization of “whole-of-government,” their involvement in and experience of WG working and their perception of critical barriers to and enablers of effective WG working. To protect the confidentiality of interviewees we refer to them by their level: Senior Executive Service (most senior), Executive Level or Australian Public Service (most junior). ICC Managers are identified because they can be either Senior Executive Service or Executive Level.

In the study we found support for the notion that, across the board, the ICCs have under-performed due to entrenched barriers to JUG which permeate the broader public service. However, we also identified resounding stories of success within this broad trend which deserve attention and which

³The one that attracted the most attention was the Mulan community SRA where community members would commit to washing children’s faces (among other measures) in exchange for the national government installing petrol bowsers and the West Australian state government monitoring and reviewing the adequacy of health services to the community (McCausland, 2005).

⁴ICCs originally came under the purview of the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, housed in the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA); following machinery of government changes in 2005 responsibility for Indigenous affairs was moved from DIMIA to the Department of Families and Community Services, which later became the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

⁵Some interviews included multiple participants.

offer broader lessons for the practice of JUG. That these examples have emerged in a context with such entrenched barriers and constraints leads us to ask, how? In the next section we report findings in two areas. First, key factors inhibiting the realization of the ICC model across the board and, secondly, important factors that facilitate effective experiences of JUG. In doing so, we point to some broader factors of relevance to those interested in developing effective models of joining-up.

Inhibitors: Common Factors That Frustrate Joined-Up Approaches

A range of factors acted as inhibitors to successful JUG in the Indigenous affairs area. Here we point to three critical ones which had a profound effect and which, we suspect, can be identified in a range of failed attempts at JUG in other settings: the lack of a supporting architecture; a programmatic focus and centralized decision-making.

Lack of a JUG-Supportive Architecture

Operating a joined-up model requires a supporting architecture which resets incentives, provides authority, builds long-term trusting-based relationships, and recognizes and rewards cooperative behaviors. In our study, we found little evidence that this architecture had been created and that too much hope was placed on the physical co-location of departments. Failure to invest in a new architecture undermined the operations of ICCs and goes a long way toward explaining the general underperformance of the model.

One of the glaring omissions was the failure to reset authority relationships. This meant that the ICC Managers had no formal authority over staff from other organizations who retained a primary vertical accountability back into their department. This not only frustrated coordination on-the-ground, it also became a powerful rationale for inaction in some cases and for serious dysfunction in others.

I could not go out and direct another person to do something in this ICC . . . because they're not from my agency. I could ask, influence, beg. (Executive Level, ICC)

Whole of government doesn't work . . . when you've got all different agencies sitting in the one place, supposedly working together . . . they're supposed to be all collaborating and telling each other what they're doing . . . I'm telling you it doesn't work and I work in an ICC and I've been there since the day it started. (Executive Level, ICC)

We also identified an ad hoc approach to the representation of departments in the ICCs, both when they were created and over time. This frustrated the effective operations of ICCs as key parties were often absent, including those with the largest share of Indigenous expenditures. Where, initially, there were productive mixes these became hard

to sustain as perverse incentives, created in common services agreements, started to bite. These agreements outlined obligations, responsibilities and arrangements for corporate services such as office accommodation, pool vehicles, and information and communication technology, which resulted in each department paying a fee to FaHSCIA for each staff member they placed in an ICC. This simple fact made the ICC model vulnerable to cost pressures and over time staff were withdrawn as part of departmental cost-cutting exercises.

Over the period of three years, they've actually pulled a lot of staff out of the ICC . . . We should have every agency represent[ed] here. We did at first but one by one they've been pulled out and never replaced. (Executive Level, ICC)

So many agencies have withdrawn their staff and . . . that's a sort of acknowledgement on those agencies' part that they can deliver their services from a central location. . . . (Executive Level, ICC)

Another missing part of the supporting architecture was the under-investment in the skills necessary to operate in this new environment. Despite the attention to training and skill development both in the literature and also in the *Connecting Government* manifesto, it appears that this did not trickle down to the ICCs in a meaningful way, thereby frustrating their ability to fulfill mandates.

There wasn't any specific training and support given for a whole of government approach. So it was just like people had to just know how to do it . . . and still there's not that support given to the staff about working in this way. . . . (Executive Level, ICC)

The ICCs . . . show pretty clearly that we haven't trained our staff very well and they didn't actually understand what whole of government meant. I don't think that there was sufficient investment in the new model . . . it does require a different way of working. (ICC Manager)

Bardach (1998) noted the importance of building high-quality operating systems to facilitate interagency collaborative capacity, but in our study we saw little evidence that this "supporting architecture" had been constructed or maintained. The large investment of faith in co-location as the critical factor to drive more collaborative, joined-up approaches did not, in the end, produce the outcomes that were envisaged by the bold experiment.

The fact that we're co-located with [Department A] and [Department B] and a couple of [Department C's] people is just window dressing. So there's no whole of government activity between them . . . There's no practical program [or] whole of government approach. (APS Level, ICC)

In this ICC [WG] is absolutely irrelevant . . . it is no more or no less than any other place where you've got people on a floor sharing space. So there is no . . . identification with the ICC. (Senior Executive Service, ICC)

You have this great vision . . . to create this level of flexibility and this one-stop-shop . . . Then you go out a few months later and see it on the ground and this part of the office is [Department A] and this is the [Department B] . . . And then [another group's] got to get approval . . . to talk to this person, all this sort of shit was going on. Unbelievable! (Senior Executive Service, ICC)

Programmatic Focus — Vertical-Horizontal Tensions

The second major inhibitor was a programmatic focus which created untenable vertical-horizontal tensions. The tension stemmed from the failure to reset authority relationships, but also reflects a deeply entrenched program focus in the APS; a focus supported by a range of incentives that drive and reward this behavior.

The funding agreements that Government [uses] just makes it really, really difficult to do whole of government work because you're funded by program, by department, and joining that up is really hard. (Senior Executive Service, National Office)

The pervasiveness of a program focus and the silos that it creates and reinforces were seen as impossible to combat, even in a setting where there was physical co-location and strong endorsement from Ministers and Secretaries. The power of programs to shape behavior has created a series of pathologies that undermine joined-up approaches and this was acknowledged by those in the ICCs and those in national office.

There's all these horrendous issues [in] the way we structure and design . . . we're all in-house, independent silos that are not meant to really do anything more than service that particular program. (Executive Level, ICC)

It seems to me the whole of government approach is about being entrepreneurial inside the public service . . . [For] program managers and project managers it's not quite like that . . . [they] are constrained within the approaches and silos. (Senior Executive Service, ICC)

When you go from the top down to the bottom [WG] disconnects at multiple levels. It disconnects through the allocation of finances, it disconnects through the rewards for your accountabilities for your program . . . so all those things work against it. (Senior Executive Service, National Office)

Staff in the ICCs noted that programs were viewed as "core business" especially by the more narrowly focused managers of these specific initiatives. In this context, joined-up activities that were supposed to be at the heart of ICC operations were seen as outside program scope, especially in the view of program managers in head office. This meant ICC staff felt pressured to focus on program work first

and foremost, rather than more joined-up work. This created vertical-horizontal tensions and shaped an environment where it was simply easier and more advantageous to deliver on program goals. Some described a strategy for managing this tension which involved engaging in joined-up work on the ground, but only reporting program specific activity back up the line, until there were positive outcomes to declare. The dominance of programs was a common theme.

Who got promoted for putting their own Agency's future second? And that's what you have to do sometimes, or . . . you keep quiet. (ICC Manager)

If you take the perspective of an agency in the process they will have a view about how the outcome is panned out from their perspective . . . The dilemma is that you've also got a whole range of other requirements that are a burden to people and people tend to fall back on them if they're a little bit lost in the relationship stuff, which are the line manager relationships around delivering programs efficiently [and] effectively. (ICC Manager)

An entrenched program focus, reinforced by powerful incentives provided a major challenge for ICCs both in terms of their day-to-day operations and their overall effectiveness. The strong financial and political accountabilities wrapped around these programs, created immense vertical-horizontal pressures which, when combined with the failure to create a supporting architecture, has played a central role in the underperformance of the ICC model to deliver on its promise.

Centralized Decision-Making

The third factor identified was the maintenance of centralized decision-making. It captures aspects of the previous two, but deserves attention in its own right given the expectation that ICCs would facilitate inter-organizational collaboration and broker locally tailored agreements with communities. We found that differential levels of decision-making power hindered this and that, over time, the discretion granted to ICC Managers eroded, especially as financial delegations started to be pulled back into the centre.

The idea [was] for ICCs to have a pool of money that they could make decisions about. Well, in the great thing about being risk averse that was all centralized back in Canberra: . . . useless basically. It just went against the whole thing about whole of government which is about sharing, devolving, not controlling everything, but taking responsibility and it's the same pattern. And that was a bit of its undoing, in fact because it was to give people the power to do the deal on the ground. (Senior Executive Service, ICC)

There's systematic and the structural problems that everyone faces . . . around the funding agreements . . . really inhibiting for anyone . . . and that certainly has happened [on] numerous occasions where . . . people have been able to say, "well I think we can do that" and . . . then going away

and finding the actual delegate says, “no” . . . and yet you’ve said, “yes” . . . the people that are actually there [in ICCs] don’t have . . . the ability to be able to make a call that can be carried through. . . . (Executive Level, National Office)

Centralization also produced delays and an inability for many actors on-the-ground to make credible commitments, effectively undermining responsiveness. It also meant that after productive negotiations in the community, decisions went through long and arduous approval processes within (potentially several) separate departments, often with sign-off by actors disconnected from communities and the implementation process. Worryingly it was noted that these delays and the failure to approve locally brokered deals produced apathetic attitudes in the community and for staff.

[In the past] you’d have a cup of tea and even if you said “no” [community members] appreciated it. Whereas now, God, they’re too scared to pick up the phone. They just feel the concept of the decisions and the power over their life is just so far removed . . . a lot of the funding has been removed back to [the capital] . . . [and] not only the position but the decision making [power]. (Executive Level, ICC)

You cannot make a decision . . . You can agree and say “we’ll take it up the line” but that doesn’t mean squat to me . . . a lot of the poor old officers who go out there every two weeks, collect notes, build relationships, but in reality it’s a very long and tortuous process. . . . (Executive Level, National Office)

Together with the two previous factors, we argue there were severe constraints across the board which produced a general trend of under-performance. The lack of a supporting architecture, a programmatic focus, and centralized decision-making are all powerful explanatory factors in explaining the dysfunctional ICC experience identified in our research and also in a series of formal evaluations of ICCs.

Facilitators: Unique Factors That Enabled Joined-Up Approaches

Within this generally disappointing story, however, we identified ICCs that had overcome these considerable constraints, exemplars that were operating in a different fashion, and delivering outcomes to their communities. We suggest these are outliers in a largely under-performing system, making them worthy of attention. We focus on two critical factors—a craftsmanship approach to leadership and the cultivation and leveraging of rich, networked relationships within government and across communities. These are not the only factors, but we found them to be the most significant in enabling ICCs to overcome deeply embedded constraints.

A Craftsmanship Leadership Style

One of the critical factors differentiating these ICCs was the adoption of a craftsmanship role by ICC Managers, echoing aspects discussed by Bardach (1998). Clearly, the architects of the model had such notions in mind when they were framing these roles and the initial position description (FaHSCIA internal document, undated) pointed to the importance of managing and nurturing relationships, steering change, negotiating, marshalling expertise, and using persuasion and influence. Despite all the constraints and barriers identified, ICC Managers in successful sites were able to encourage collaboration and lead their teams effectively.

I think essentially it comes down to leadership . . . Where you’ve had a really good leader in an ICC who’s been able to merge the team and gel the team together, they’ve come up with some fantastic successes in terms of innovative things that are really whole of government and they’re working well on the ground. . . . (Senior Executive Service, National Office)

When describing ICC Managers in these successful centers several important factors were mentioned. These mirrored important ideas in the literature—trust, shared responsibility, inclusiveness, and high-quality communication.

It’s so crucial how leadership communicates and provides direction . . . we have to build relationships and trust . . . If you don’t get that leadership right, well so many things fall out after that. And you can apply that, not just to the head of the organization, but at the manager level as well . . . [You] need to be prepared to listen, not talk all the time . . . [the leader must] be very inclusive and accommodating . . . [and] you’ve got to feel very trusting . . . [and] you’ve got to feel comfortable with . . . sharing all the responsibility, but not the control . . . We’re all responsible for the outcome, but we don’t have to control everything . . . it takes certain types of people secure in their own capacity and in their own leadership . . . There are few people like that in my book. (Senior Executive Service, ICC)

Another aspect of this craftsmanship role we saw in practice was the ability to shape mandates, systems, structures, and programs to better fit with community needs. This demonstrated an ability to think broadly, marshal resources and reconfigure them to meet their aims.

I’ve just recast the way we do business in ICCs to start thinking about not trying or not pretending to be whole of government approach to everything . . . but more closely aligning . . . between two and three key sites for intensive work . . . Now that is not necessarily a [geographic] site, it might be a function. So it might be we’ll concentrate on youth in this location. What can we intensively do around that? As opposed to saying “well, we’ve got the whole of the [X region] and we’re going to make sure that everything

works properly in the [X region]” . . . that’s unrealistic. (ICC Manager)

I use the . . . the social inclusion agenda, to do most of our work under now because that allows a bit more freedom . . . We’re not restricted in what we can then do if we use that as your mandate, whereas if we only ever use the Indigenous stuff, that’s all we’re allowed to do. . . . (ICC Manager)

While in poor performing ICCs formal structures were seen as hard, rigid barriers to operating, in successful ICCs these were recast as obstacles to work through or around. As one of the ICC Managers explained, formal structures made joining-up complex, not impossible.

There are lots of different demarcations [and] portfolio responsibilities, unclear direction, [and] barriers . . . My view in relation to it is you’ve got to navigate your way through those and find a solution, which is going to impact upon families in [this region] . . . understanding the context in which you’re operating . . . I don’t see them [as] mutually exclusive they’re just a challenge and a bit like going through a maze . . . you just basically work your way through it and you come to a conclusion that is productive long-term. (ICC Manager)

Managers in effective ICCs gave staff permission to operate and “break the rules” (Parston & Timmins, 1998); they encouraged innovation, were willing to experiment, and encouraged staff to challenge the status quo. This fit well with the notion that they took a very broad interpretation of their mandate, encouraging creativity, new ideas, and a problem-solving approach among their staff.

There is less of a demonstration of support for innovation than I’d like . . . To be quite frank I’m out there; a bit further than a lot of people. I much prefer to find solutions that work . . . that’s why I’m here, that’s what I thought I was here for was actually to find solutions locally that work. (ICC Manager)

There was also a clear commitment to inclusive, informal, trust-based leadership styles which were used as a means for encouraging communication, information-sharing, and innovation.

We talk. We’re always talking about the job and what we’re doing and what you’re up to and it’s a matter of asking questions. Don’t believe in staff meetings and all that formality . . . if you need to know, get off your backside and find out and ask the question . . . On the one level we’re professional, get the job done, we’re relaxed we’re all laughing . . . harmonious . . . and that sort of comes out in our day-to-day work . . . [but] it’s almost like the departments we work for work against that. . . . (Executive Level, ICC)

I was just saying to someone earlier we’re a very noisy bunch in here. We yell and shout and jump around and get excited, we run around a lot and we shout at each other from

one end to the other and we’re quite interactive and the pace of life here is a bit quicker. (Executive Level, ICC)

I think we’re well placed though because . . . I tell staff everything . . . and I know we’re told things in confidence but I tell my staff everything . . . So they know why I’m flustered today or why I’ve got my door closed or . . . what I’m dealing with so they don’t . . . feel like it’s them that’s making me the way I’m acting today. I’ve got to work on this . . . or my head space has got to be here because of these reasons . . . They cop it. (ICC Manager)

A craftsmanship approach (Bardach, 1998) relies on purposeful practitioners who can overcome constraints through the strategic and judicious use of resources and opportunities. In an environment with a strong outcomes focus but a range of barriers to enabling joined-up ways of working, we were able to find evidence of success which can be partially attributed to the adoption of a craftsmanship approach. Adept at bringing together actors and crafting solutions, some ICCs were exemplars within the larger experiment.

Cultivating and Leveraging Rich, Networked Relationships

The cultivation of rich networked relationships was the second factor identified. This included relationships within the ICCs, between different levels and parts of government, and also into the community. Flowing through these networks was a wealth of expertise, built up over many years working in this policy domain, and harnessed through relationships nurtured over time.

You’re using local knowledge and people like [manager] and [ICC Manager] and myself have worked in Indigenous Affairs probably for 20 years. [You’ve] got a collective of 60 years experience minimum . . . we have seen how delivery has worked over a number of years and what works and what doesn’t, we can look at coming up with those different options. (Executive Level, ICC)

The ability to develop and nurture these relationships relied heavily on the (seemingly accidental) combination of long-term postings and the employment of local community members. This provided a level of embeddedness in the community which created a very different dynamic, and a unique form of accountability.

I’ve had three postings through my Public Service career. I spent five years in [X], I spent eight years in [Y] and I’ve spent five years here. So I tend to sit in a place for awhile because I believe you don’t make a difference unless you do . . . I do choose my places with care. I was asked to come to [this area] because it had very little momentum, which I wanted to change. (ICC Manager)

We try to employ local staff . . . the local staff have very, very valuable knowledge of the local people so we’re talking

about language groups, family groups and the services that we provide out of the [ICC] (Executive Level, ICC).

Regardless of government, regardless of policy, we're renowned [for] our networking . . . [the staff are] a dedicated mob. I mean they live here, the kids are born here; they go to school here. They love the local clients and whatever we could do in terms of working together we did it . . . The synergies work . . . [We have a] higher than average Indigenous staff who have enormous positive networks and knowledge . . . and that's been terribly beneficial I've just saved seven months work by tapping into local knowledge . . . [and] opening doors to the community. If someone rings you up and growls and sort of says, "I'll have a cup of tea with you next time. How's my granddaughter in there going?" It's kind of nice and also I think it builds up a bit of trust. (Executive Level, ICC)

Having long-term professional relationships within the ICCs was important to the ongoing commitment of staff to the broader policy agenda. At one of these ICCs, many staff members had long histories of working in the region, and they shared "war stories" of the constant restructuring of departments and programs which saw them frequently changing titles and organizations, but still working together. Over time they had developed high trust relationships, and huge stocks of corporate knowledge, which proved to be an invaluable asset in the new model.

Just this morning there have been two instances . . . where we shared information that's probably, well is definitely—confidential . . . And it was just us getting together going, "Look at this, oh my God, we can't talk about that anywhere else." . . . It's just that knowledge . . . [so] you're able to work [together] better and come to a solution . . . we call it the 'cone of silence' because it doesn't go outside this office and we certainly don't discuss it with anyone else . . . it's just something that we've worked out in this office [because] when you don't share information it's very hard to get joint projects and whole of government involvement. (Executive Level, ICC)

Nurturing relationships back into head office and across into other departments was also critical in achieving outcomes. Such personal, often informal relationships enabled actors to develop networks that were important to leveraging resources and allowing them to short-circuit long and protracted approval processes.

Through [my] networks [I] had developed a relationship with the person who made the recommendations to the delegate in Canberra, so I could ring that person and say, "look this is what I'm thinking, this is what I'm working on, this is what I'm doing what do you think?" And that person would say, "Well, if you do it this way and that way I can see what you're doing is going to be really valuable and this is the way to put it" and it would go straight through, it was very quick. (Executive Level, ICC)

We've actually been successful in getting a lot of funding into the region because of people that we've networked with in our national office. [I] used to go to Canberra once a year . . . I would go . . . and spend the time in the office. Anybody that I knew I'd ring up and say, "Have you got a spare desk in your office? Can I come and sit there?" And just sitting in our national office Indigenous section for a day meant that you formed all these relationships with people. (Executive Level, ICC)

Successful and effective ICCs also had a commitment to continuous nurturing of personal and professional networks. This ensured that new actors were brought into the network, enabling innovation, change, and a certain level of dynamism in what is an ever-changing policy domain.

As long as you keep building on [the network] and it's a dynamic thing . . . it needs dynamism about [it] and you've got to keep reinvigorating it. So that's why I talk about being entrepreneurial, not just because you know everyone in [this town and] you can get a few projects up . . . You've actually got to be prepared to think outside the box. So there is a bit of a different type of networking relationship building, a dynamism or an agility. (Senior Executive Service, ICC)

In the end, these successful ICCs were committed to doing "what worked" with a range of actors from across the policy domain. The range of factors discussed above enabled them to develop rich, networked relationships that could be leveraged for the benefit of the community within which they worked. While they were adept at accessing formal channels and leveraging resources, perhaps one of the most critical differentiating factors between these ICCs and the larger group has been the investment in, and cultivation of these informal networks.

We're quite happy with egos if it gets us the right mix of stuff on the ground. So I'd like to say it's a formal network I use, but it isn't really. It would be nice if this was formalized more [but] it's about . . . right people for right places, right time. I use informal networks as much as I use formal ones just through personal relationships I have with people. (ICC Manager)

Together we found these two facilitators to be important in explaining the differences in levels of effectiveness between ICCs included in our study. While all ICCs faced the inhibitors set out in the previous section, we found that the combination of a craftsmanship approach and the development of rich, networked relationships enabled these ICCs to overcome these constraints. Not only were they functioning internally as had been envisaged in the original vision for this joined-up experiment, they were also delivering outcomes to their communities which would help deliver on the government's policy agenda of "closing the gap." In the following section we build on these findings to draw on some

general lessons for the prospects and pitfalls of joined-up approaches.

PROSPECTS AND PITFALLS: LESSONS FOR JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT

Joined-up approaches offer enormous potential for reconfiguring the way in which governments operate to deliver a range of benefits for policy-making, implementation, and service delivery. There has now been extensive experimentation with joining-up and these studies have identified a range of “must haves” and entrenched barriers have been identified. Our study examined the question of how and why the implementation of JUG works and our findings help inform the broader question of the prospects and pitfalls of this approach.

Firstly, there are clearly pitfalls in the implementation of JUG. In our study we focused on three which were powerful explanatory factors in this specific setting, but which we argue have currency in the broader literature on JUG. Collaborative, joined-up working requires a supporting architecture which reshapes structures, systems, incentives, and behaviors and, in the longer-term, cultures and norms. Without careful attention to, and investment in, creating this architecture, most attempts at JUG are doomed to fail, as the power of embedded ways of doing things restrains innovation and undermines cooperation. The question arises of what such architecture would involve and here we point back to the well-developed literature on collaboration and joining-up more broadly, while introducing some other ideas. These factors are well known, but there appears to be an unwillingness or inability to drive them through bureaucratic structures.

New accountability structures, redesign of performance and reward systems, vesting formal authority in key actors, new incentive structures, and dedicated resources have already been discussed (Bardach, 1998; Parston & Timmins, 1998). Other changes could include the adoption of matrix-style structures which enable internal coordination and information sharing for staff involved in joined-up projects (Burns & Wholey, 1993), and are capable of accommodating multiple authority lines (Knight, 1976). Designing performance criteria linked to the practice of collaboration, ensuring rewards for achievement of joined-up goals, and a reconfiguration of budget systems to better facilitate joined-up working would also help in resetting incentives and driving behavioral change.

Clearly there needs to be investment in training to enable the development of skills in joined-up working (Pollitt, 2003). We identified a clear lack of this in the Australian case, and suspect this is not an unusual finding. Without this support, behavioral change is difficult, and too much time and effort is spent trying to work out “how” to do JUG,

rather than actually doing it. In sum, there needs to be serious attention to the idea of creating collaborative structures and processes to enable partnerships to be sustainable (Huxham & Vangen, 2000).

The findings related to a programmatic focus and centralized decision-making connect to the supporting architecture factor. Enabling JUG to work on-the-ground requires decentralization of power and resources so that actors at that level can broker deals. This does not remove accountability requirements and, if done well, can fit into a broader framework of agreements at the political level. Without this power and the accompanying resources however, those at the coal-face will struggle to build trust and relationships because they essentially become impotent. Unwrapping some of the hard incentives and accountability requirements around specific programs is required if JUG is to work in practice and, while this may go against broader trends, some loosening is required to enable joined-up approaches to work. The inflexibility of existing approaches stymies JUG and ensures that broader policy goals can not be effectively tackled.

With only this part of the story the prospects for JUG look bleak, as it will require too much change and a radical transformation of the current operating systems and structures in many countries. In our setting there was powerful political support and ownership by the most senior public servants, but still the model had under-performed—this provides much cause for pessimism. However, we also had glimpses into how JUG could work, even in an environment of severe constraints.

Echoing Bardach’s (1998) craftsmanship theory, we saw actors in this environment building inter-agency collaborative capacity, developing trust, jointly solving problems, and steering major initiatives involving complex constellations of stakeholders. These actors developed deep, networked relationships across the policy domain, and were able to leverage these for the pursuit of broader policy goals. However, although this success may evoke optimism, another of the critical factors was partially missing—the development of high-quality operating systems. While these may have been developed locally, they need broader support and the commitment to the creation of a supporting architecture to embed practice and ensure their sustainability.

In returning to the question of the prospects and pitfalls of JUG, we conclude that while there is incredible promise wrapped up in the JUG agenda, there remain seemingly insurmountable barriers. The three factors we identified in the inhibitors section tell a powerful story of bureaucratic pervasiveness; of how, with all the best intentions, deeply embedded bureaucratic characteristics impede attempts at working across boundaries and of connecting outside of silos, to deliver on the joined-up agenda. Without attention to such factors, joined-up approaches in any setting will be bound to under-perform.

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