



Global trends for community services in Western Australia

July 2017

Human services in 2020 are customized, data-driven and technology-infused, continually redefined by new possibilities. Governments tap community assets and peer-to-peer support programs to augment service delivery. Behavioural psychology and economics play a larger role in designing interventions, while outcome-oriented social innovation financing helps scale the programs that work.

Mobile technology, sensors and wearable devices enable remote monitoring while virtual check-ins complement in-person interactions. A new breed of caseworker-intrapreneur brings fresh ideas and innovation to human services organisations. Outcome-based funding moves beyond fringe status thanks to advances in measurement, data analytics and large inflows of private and non-profit funding.



It is all about 'community'

Established on 1 July, the Department of Communities (DoC) consolidates a range of State Government human and social services. This is a significant step for Western Australia, representing the beginning of a complex process to ensure a more holistic and co-ordinated delivery of services to individuals, families and communities, particularly in regional and remote areas.

Globally, there has been a move away from the traditional 'client/department' relationship, to a more empowering model in which clients make their own choices and determine the services that best suit their needs. This shift away from a 'one size fits all' view of the client will incentivise providers to continue to provide the best services they can in the most efficient way, in an ever more competitive market.

There are five key global trends in community services that we need to consider in Western Australia.



Client experience and expectations



Digitisation



Policy making and service delivery



Productivity



Talent

Client directed care



Client experience and expectations

Increasingly, Client Directed Care is being implemented across a range of social and community services. No longer is it the case that the client receives a service simply because a provider can deliver it. In the Client Directed Care model, clients are allocated a budget, from which they work with a coordinator or the like to choose the services that would help improve their particular set of circumstances.

In Australia, we have seen this through aged care and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, but the model is broadly transferable to other types of social services.

This model puts clients at the centre, with their care and service journeys being redesigned through their own eyes. Client/service engagement ensures there is clear, efficient interaction; ranging from multi-channel communications to digital or face-to-face.

As a result of the intersection of client empowerment, consumer technology and information democratisation, the role of government is changing. Clients and community demand transparent or 'Open Government', as well as access to more public sector data for opportunities and innovation.

The connectivity of today is different to the connectivity of tomorrow. The development and deployment of the 'Internet of Things' is creating *Smart Living* opportunities in both cities and the regions. For a geography as dispersed as Western Australia, this creates significant opportunities to connect and deliver services to clients in new ways.



Digitisation

The opportunities and possibilities that exist through integrating and changing services through digitisation are endless.

Digitisation is being used as a core solution to client-centric design, through the development of Standardised Digital Services.

Increasingly, Cloud Services are being deployed, with a significant cost reduction impact. This does require governance and tools for moving infrastructure, services, and platforms to the Cloud are in place and that data risk has been adequately addressed.

As a result, security and risk strategies are increasingly evident. Analytics frameworks that guide decisions and inform investments (including data protection, privacy, threat, intelligence and overall network security) are a very important first step.

Challenges may be encountered in how to keep services up to date, effective and accessible to clients. It is important to remember that an iterative approach to digital transformation is best so that changes can be delivered quickly and lessons learned.



Policy making and service delivery

While there are pressures to implement reforms and private sector participation is growing, the role of government in setting policy is unquestionable. Governments are taking the lead with transparent, collaborative and open policy making.

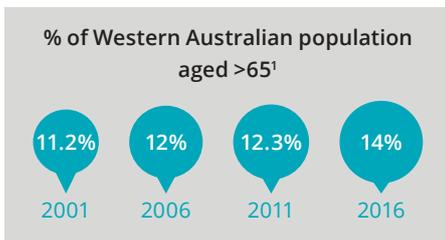
With digitisation and client empowerment through technology growing amid concerns about privacy and security, governments are also taking the lead in setting governance for behavioural insights – using economic and data analysis from multiple sources to obtain people insights to design policy and services.

In setting policy, alternative service delivery financing models is a growing trend. With demand for services continuing to grow, client empowerment and economic constraints, this trend is worthy of further consideration in the Western Australian context.



Productivity

Populations in the Western world are ageing and demand for services is growing, but the public purse is not. The old adage of 'doing more with less' has never been more real, and community services are no different.



Service providers (both government and non-government) are seeking new ways to deliver services. Service innovation is seeking to focus on the strengths of different providers. Rather than being all things to all people, a more pragmatic understanding and approach is being taken. This is resulting in some client-centric public-private partnerships being created and delivered, but it is still relatively early days.



Talent

With so much change occurring, a common first reaction of many is that employment must be at risk. However, these trends and changes represent an opportunity.

The number of employees may not necessarily reduce, but the roles they perform are changing. There are new ways of working and new jobs being created. Automation and analytics are changing jobs from back-office processing and administration to front-line roles with direct client impact. As a result, service quality and employee morale are increasing.

However, this journey and transition takes significant leadership time and effort. Workforce planning to address capability gaps can require difficult conversations, but the result is well trained delivery staff having the responsibility and information they need to serve clients. It is also a great opportunity to retain corporate knowledge, which only further enhances service delivery quality.

¹ Source: www.censusdata.abs.gov.au

Keys to embracing change

Start the journey

Change can be viewed through multiple lenses. It can be seen as difficult and uncomfortable, or as an opportunity to reset the vision and identify new ways of working.

The trends discussed are client-driven; either directly from their experience, or a response to their specific circumstances. Embracing these trends demonstrates empathy to the client and community.

Rethink 'how'

There is rapid convergence of enabling technologies, client-centric design and digitisation.

Incremental innovation and implementation is best, rather than a large-scale transformation. Learn and evolve, but don't stand still.

Circle back with stakeholders to provide updates on progress and lessons learnt, to continue to the next stage of change.

Manage what can be achieved

Despite significant budget and operating constraints, these should not result in a 'do nothing' approach.

Be bold, but be pragmatic. Agree what can be changed, and what cannot, and be open as to why and why not (every business has constraints).

Encourage stakeholders to advocate for changes and apply iterative lessons learnt.

Give your workers and stakeholders the opportunity to participate, provide ideas and feedback – they are all a part of the solution.

Client first, always

Any changes made should always be to improve the client's experience and life circumstances.

Developing an understanding of their interactions with community services, the challenges they face, and what can be changed to improve this experience is the best way to ensure that change is focussed on the right outcome. It means experiencing first-hand how services and interactions with government impact lives.

Putting the client at the centre of change not only helps the client, but will help leaders lead change with confidence and momentum.

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