

CSO Review of first OGP National Action Plan: Overview of Process, & Impressions

The Open Government Partnership was launched in 2011 to provide an international platform for domestic reformers committed to making their governments more open, accountable, and responsive to citizens. The primary mechanism of the OGP for supporting domestic reformers to secure open government reforms is the development and implementation of National Action Plans by member countries. The CSO Review outlined here was designed to support the rigorous and comprehensive scrutiny of an action plan by civil society. More about the CSO Review at ogpreview.org

A Civil Society Review of [Australia's first Open Government National Action Plan](#) is now underway. The review is a parallel, independent assessment of the ambition and openness of the NAP. It is not part of the official Independent Reporting Mechanism. The review may be taken into consideration by the IRM researcher. A number of other countries have chosen to participate in this parallel process, to facilitate learning and improvements during and OGP cycle. This review has three steps, the first of which has just been completed:

Step 1. A lead civil society organisation (lead CSO) conducts a preliminary review. In Australia's case that's the [Open Government Partnership Civil Society Network](#). We asked those who've participated to share their experiences via a survey. We report on first impressions from 7 civil society respondents below.

This preliminary review has three sets of questions (about 70 questions all up)

- Assessing the process of developing the National Action Plan
- Review the quality and ambition of the Action Plan (reviewing 5 randomly selected commitments)
- Evaluating the National Action Plan as a Whole

Respondents answered multiple choice responses, and made comments on in each section. Contributions came from 7 Civil Society members, including 4 CSO IWG members. Involve.org.uk will publish full results in due course, where scoring each question is weighted to ensure that each is given the worth it deserves. In the meantime, here are some initial impressions.

Assessing the process of developing the National Action Plan

PM&C were commended for responding positively in August to CSO representation that a formal dialogue mechanism was necessary to progress the plan. The PM&C team showed a willingness to take on board feedback on improving OGP consultations. However, no explanation or reasons were given for rejection of public input.

Review the quality and ambition of the Action Plan

Five commitments selected at random. These were 1.3, 1.4, 3.1, 4.1 & 5.2, covering themes of extractives transparency, corporate corruption, high value datasets, election & political integrity, & participation in government decisions. Assessors reviewed commitments for quality and ambition. On average, scores sat between 'somewhat' and 'moderately' successful in each of the criteria assessed for development and ambition. Commitments on the whole were found not to be sufficiently challenging, and comments on commitment details suggest that the plan shows some repeat of existing work, commitments were vague, lack stretch goals and committed only to broad outcomes.

Evaluating the National Action Plan as a Whole

PM&C team were commended for taking on board feedback in the consultation process and their hard work on improving OGP consultations within constraints. Most commitments were welcomed, and are described as showing potential for ambition. Concern was expressed where key elements of OGP spirit are missing. For example beneficial ownership register that isn't public. It was not clear whether reforms sufficiently align with the bigger Government policy agenda, for departments to drive change. Lack of public high level ministerial support for Open Government agenda was also noted. Establishing an MSF with good Terms of Reference for genuine collaboration was described as important.

Step 2. The preliminary review will be shared with other CSOs and the government point of contact for comments.

Step 3. Based on the comments received, the review will be revised by the lead CSO. The lead CSO has discretion to respond to comments as they see fit. The completed review is then published, along with the comments.

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