

KPMG submission

Australia's first Open Government National Action Plan

18 November 2016

Contact: Grant Wardell-Johnson

+61 2 9335 7128

1. KPMG welcomes the opportunity to comment on *Australia's first Open Government National Action Plan* released by Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on 31 October 2016.
2. We support both the actions of the former Attorney-General, the Honourable Mark Dreyfus and Prime Minister, the Honourable Malcolm Turnbull, in affirming and re-affirming Australia's commitment to the Open Government Partnership.
3. We also support the five agenda topics chosen for focus over the next 2 years – (i) transparency and accountability in business, (ii) open data and digital transformation, (iii) access to Government information, (iv) integrity in the public sector and (v) public participation and engagement – and the 14 commitment areas contained under these umbrella topics. We also agree with the consultation process to be adopted in relation to each of these commitment areas.
4. KPMG believes that there are considerable benefits from greater transparency and access to government data. These include, but are not limited to,
 - i. building trust in the community,
 - ii. better educating the community on the operations and functions of Government,
 - iii. promotion of new ideas and encouraging innovation,
 - iv. provision of opportunities arising from public data that could be exploited both here and internationally and thus provide a boost to the economy,
 - v. improvement of the efficiency of Government, including efficiency across the three levels of Government through a better understanding of respective responsibilities and linkages,
 - vi. providing a better understanding of community needs.
5. As the Government would agree transparency issues and dealing with Government information involve tricky issues of balancing rights to privacy, protection of commercial information to ensure competitiveness, ensuring costs of collating information are reasonable and that the measures adopted promote beneficial and not counter-productive behaviours.
6. We will welcome the opportunity to comment on this “delicate balance” during many of the various consultation processes to be established.

7. KPMG has had significant involvement in promoting greater open government, having released a number of publications in recent times. These include:
 - a. [The 2016 IoT and AgTech Summit](#)
 - b. [KPMG Australia views on the National Innovation and Science Agenda](#)
 - c. [Tax Reform: KPMG's submission to Treasury](#)
 - d. [Better data, better government](#)
 - e. [Sharing government data for a better world](#)
8. We do have two substantive comments to be made in relation to the Plan. The first concerns the representation on the Interim Working Group. We believe that the group would benefit from the addition of two representatives – one from the large business community and the other from an umbrella professional business organisation. This would provide additional perspectives on areas that the broad program may wish to explore.

Recommendation 1: The Final Working Group should contain additional representatives from the large business community and an umbrella professional business organisation.

9. The second point concerns the addition of an agenda topic area. This involves the need for more transparent government accounts in our Federation. The concept is for the states, territories and the Federal Government to release “All-State Government Accounts”. These accounts would show our national, and not simply our Federal Government revenue, expenses and indebtedness, but also the allocation from the Federal Government to each of the states and territories by function.
10. We believe that this would promote a better discussion on our Federation, greater accountability for spending, a better perspective for considering our future priorities and greater efficiency in the use of Government funds. We believe the benefits are substantial and widespread and go to the heart of what the Open Government Partnership goals are about. We have outlined this concept on page 14 of our [Tax Reform: KPMG's submission to Treasury](#).

11. This additional agenda item could also help the Government open up the Federation Reform Agenda discussion again and provide better transparency in respect of the spending of the states. This is particularly pertinent given a number of National Partnership Agreements are due to expire next year, such as the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and the National Affordable Housing Agreement.

Recommendation 2: An additional agenda item should involve the production of “All Australian Government Accounts”, which would include Federal, State and Territory revenue, expenses and indebtedness, but also the allocation of Federal Government funds to each of the states and territories by function.

12. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss each of these recommendations with you further.