

Derek Screen submission
14 November 2016

Public Data Branch, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet,

Hi all,

Thanks for the ongoing process in creating Australia's first National Action Plan for the OGP.

As an interested individual who has followed this process and taken part in this process from the start, I thought I would write and put in my 2 cents worth regarding the draft of the NAP.

Without the necessity of going into great depths as others will no doubt do - people who are much better equipped to do so that I - it is necessary for me to let you know my views.

1. Whilst it is obvious that you have taken into account the perspectives of a large number of stakeholders, it appears to be very obvious to me as an individual that you have not taken into account at all, or at very least extremely minimally, the input of individuals from the community. Having read through the draft NAP several times as well as turned up to the Melbourne discussion and information day, it seems to me that those members of the general community have been left out of this process and only the major stakeholders have been consulted. This is bought home by the fact that the Draft NAP was only released with essentially 48 hours active notice to register to attend the Melbourne information day and even then, it was held during the day when most individuals would be at work and unable to attend and ask questions. I find this to be quite upsetting and demoralising for an individual to take it and yet still feel part of this movement.
2. The DRAFT NAP espouses the ideals of Openness, Transparency, Accountability, Access to Government information Integrity on the Public Sector and Public Participation and engagement. All of these things are to me key in moving forward with the OGP and without these things membership to the OGP and a NAP for our country would merely be window dressing. To this effect, the government needs to GUARANTEE the Federal FOI act and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. Without appropriate funding of this office and its staff to a degree that would enable it to properly function, and without the upholding of the Federal FOI Act, membership to the OGP is not possible. The current Federal Government seems to have taken it upon itself to severely hamper the operations of the OAIC through funding cuts, direct assault on the management through the media and the nobbling of the powers of the OAIC making the current situation nothing short of an eyedropper of support for a needy ocean. If the current Federal Government continues to undermine the OAIC then in my mind this country should remove itself from applying for and accepting membership in the OGP. Membership in the OGP and what the current Federal Government is doing to the OAIC CANNOT run together.

I would ask the current Federal Government to reverse its attacks on the OAIC and properly fund the department and guarantee its staff and management or cease actively trying to become an OGP member country.

3. Membership in the OGP is essential for this country to move forward with the rest of the world. We are already well behind in this stakes with over 70 countries joining before we do. I would suggest that membership in the OGP is like membership in the UN - it is vitally important to the prosperity and well being of our nation and it should be above politics and

political interference.

Membership to the OGP should NOT be something that searches or begs for funding from the budget each year, instead automatically receiving ongoing funding to run the unit. It should also be enshrined in legislation that membership to the OGP is a priority of the federal government no matter which party is in power and as such should be legislatively protected from undermining, disbanding or subordinating to lesser offices. In short, the office running Australia's involvement in the OGP should be guaranteed under law. At the moment, this entire process, staff, office and work can be shut down at a whim by the federal government for any reason and this is not in the best interests of the nation. I would ask that this office's protection be a priority of this current Federal Government.

Many thanks for your time and looking forward to continuing to be involved in this process and ongoing operations.

Derek Screen