Expression of interest civil society member of Australia's Open Government Forum

Associate Professor Johan Lidberg, Monash University, http://profiles.arts.monash.edu.au/johan-lidberg/

Introduction

Australian universities are important members of civil society and its researchers make important contributions to policy making and implementation. I believe my 17 years of experience researching the practical functionality of access to information systems in Australia and internationally could contribute to the implementation and monitoring of Australia's first OGP National Action Plan (NAP). To my knowledge I am the only Australian researcher focused primarily on the practical implementation and user experience of Freedom of Information and general information access, rather than the legal aspects of these systems.

Selection criteria

- *Their demonstrated support of OGP's vision and the Open Government Declaration*

I was one of the founding members of the steering committee for the Australian Open Government Partnership Civil Society Network. The committee was instrumental in providing input during the co-creation between civil society and government in the lead up to the first NAP. This was done by acting as a liaison between the interim working group and broader civil society as well as personally contributing feedback on the draft NAP. In this role I became intimately familiar with the OGP's vision and declaration, both of which my work on the steering committee supported strongly.

- *Their expertise relevant to the Open Government Partnership, including existing or probable future Australian Open Government commitments*

I have compared and assessed FOI in many countries and was in 2010 invited to serve on the international Advisory Council for the Global Right to Information Rating. This is an index rating and comparing **all 111** existing FOI laws - http://www.rti-rating.org/methodology/. The rating is created by international civil society and is becoming increasingly influential as a bench marking tool. I am still on the advisory council and my intricate knowledge of the research and methodology could be valuable for the forum. In 2016 I completed an Australia wide survey and comparison of the practical functionality of original and reformed FOI laws. I have sent this research to the Information Frameworks Project Team.

- *Their ability to engage broad and diverse community networks*

My work on the Australian OGP Civil Society steering committee has demonstrated this. I also bring to the table an extensive international network of civil society groups based on my work for the Global RTI Rating. To this should be added my domestic and international connections in the academic community.

- *Their previous experience working with and influencing government*

I was invited to the government and civil society co-creation workshop in Canberra, April 2016, to start the first NAP process. I was consulted by the federal government 2008-2010 when the latest major reform of federal FOI was undertaken. As part of the process I was asked to appear at a senate hearing.

- *The desirability of maintaining some continuity between successive Forums, balanced with the desirability of reaching new communities and reflecting emerging open government priorities*

Maintaining continuity is important, but at the same time it is important that civil society representatives do not get too entrenched in the forum. My suggestion is to retain three civil society representatives when new calls for nominations are issued. A forum member should serve a maximum of two terms.

In my view one of the most important current, and future issue, is to engage with is the concept of Public Sector Information (PSI). To my mind this is not mentioned adequately in the first NAP. PSI was made an EU directive in 2003 and now many member countries have implemented it in national law. At its core the PSI concept views all information/data created with public funds as being in the public domain. This thinking is also fundamental to the emergence of e-governance. Significant work remains to be done on PSI and e-governance in Australia and I would like to contribute to this work as a forum member.