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Analysis of online public consultation trials: The quadrivium of policy, culture, resources, technology

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Jim Macnamara PhD[1]
Vicki Bamford[2]
Judy Betts[3]

University of Technology Sydney
Australia

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Abstract

Following its landslide victory in the 2007 Australian Federal election which employed an unprecedented level of online communication under the theme 'Kevin07', the Rudd Labor government launched a series of online public consultation trials in late 2008 as part of a commitment to online citizen engagement and participation which many refer to as 'e-democracy' or 'government 2.0'. This paper reports independent research into the planning and conduct of these trials, and compares and contrasts Australian experiences with international e-democracy developments including the Obama presidential campaign, findings of the Digital Dialogues review in the UK, the UK Power of Information Task Force, and online consultation experiments conducted as part of the MIT Deliberatorium. It presents 10 key findings that can be grouped into four areas of focus and argues that technology, often the major focus, is important but less significant than factors relating to policy, culture and resources. The findings of this research, together with insights from international studies and reviews, help inform future planning of online public consultation and citizen engagement.

Introduction

Online political communication has gained worldwide media and scholarly attention, particularly following emergence of interactive Web applications such as blogs, social networks, photo and video sharing sites like YouTube, wikis, and Twitter, described broadly as Web 2.0. The 2004 US presidential election campaign was described as "a period of innovation and experimentation in the use of new media technologies" by Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture* (2006, p. 209) and as "a critical turning point for political communication via the internet" by Xenos and Moy (2007, p. 704). In 2004, presidential candidate Howard Dean rose meteorically, albeit ultimately unsuccessfully, in US politics using what his campaign manager Joe Trippi called a "perfect storm of presidential politics" utilising online fund-raising, blogs and smart mobs (Jenkins, 2006, p. 209; Trippi, 2004).
However, while Xenos and Moy say that "2004 marks the year in which online politics finally reached a 'mainstream' audience" (p. 704), many of the most widely used Web 2.0 media today did not exist in 2004. YouTube was launched in 2005; Facebook existed only as a students' online network at Harvard University in 2004, opening to the public only in September 2006; and Second Life and Twitter also launched in 2006.

A more contemporary gauge of the potential for online communication to play a role in the public sphere was provided by the 2007 Australian federal election and even more particularly by the 2008 US presidential campaign. A study of the 2007 Australian federal election, widely described as the "Google election" (Gibson & Ward, 2008, p. 5) and "the YouTube election" found such claims to be "greatly exaggerated" (Macnamara, 2008, p. 8). While internet reporting and discussion of the election outstripped press, radio and TV coverage in total (Goot, 2008, p. 99), a study of use of interactive Web 2.0 media by major political actors found only 26 of Australia's 226 incumbent politicians (11.5 per cent) had a MySpace site; just 15 (6.6 per cent) had a blog; only 13 (5.75 per cent) posted videos on YouTube; just eight (3.5 per cent) had a Facebook site; and only seven (3.1 per cent) podcast. Furthermore, it reported that most online media used by politicians and political parties either heavily moderated public comments, or turned off interactive features altogether. However, there was significant online public engagement in some independent blogs and activist group sites such as GetUp (www.getup.org.au), Election Tracker (www.electiontracker.net.au) which presented a youth perspective on political issues, and You Decide (http://youdecide2007.org) which invited citizens to report on issues in their electorates (Macnamara, 2008, p. 9).

The 2008 US presidential campaign brought interactive Web 2.0 media into heightened focus as channels through which to engage citizens, although it has to be noted that much of this was aimed at fund-raising. However, in terms of the Habermassian notion of the public sphere which seeks to involve a large number of citizens in reflective thinking and rational debate about political issues (Habermas, 1989, 2006), and other models of representative, republican and participatory democracy, there was also evidence of significant online engagement in the Obama campaign. In a Pew Internet and American Life Project study, Smith and Rainie (2008) report that during the 2008 presidential campaign, 46 per cent of all Americans used the internet to access news about the campaign, share their views and mobilise others (p. i). Whereas 13 per cent of Americans said they had watched a video about the 2004 campaign online, 35 per cent reported watching at least one political video in 2008 (p. ii). Even more significantly, 19 per cent of Americans reported going online weekly to "do something related to the campaign" (p. i). This suggests that political communication was not restricted to the major political actors, but involved significant citizen engagement.

Nevertheless, the processes of public consultation and citizen engagement require political leaders, public servants and scholars to look beyond election campaigns to examine uses and effectiveness of interactive internet communications more broadly and this area is receiving increasing attention.

E-government and e-democracy

Use of the internet for delivery of information and services as well as public consultation and citizen engagement has received increasing attention around the world since the mid-1990s and a number of terms such as *e-government*, *open government*, *government 2.0, e-democracy*, *e-citizenship*, *digital democracy*, *teledemocracy* and *cyberdemocracy* have entered the political lexicon.

While some define e-government broadly encompassing all online contact between governments and citizens (eg. Silcock, 2001), this term is most widely recognised as referring to delivery of government information and services to citizens conceptualised as 'consumers'. For instance, a United Nations report on use of technology by governments defines e-government as "utilising the internet and the World Wide Web for delivering government information and services to citizens (ASPA and UNDPEPA, 2002, p. 1). The US *E-Government Act 2002*, one of the first pieces of national legislation to enshrine the concept, defines e-government in similar terms as:

> The use by the government of Web-based internet applications and other information technologies, combined with processes that implement these technologies, to (a) enhance the access to and delivery of government information and services to the public, other agencies, and other government entities; or (b) bring about improvements in government operations that may include effectiveness, efficiency, service quality, or transformation (as cited in Seifert, 2006, p. 26).

In analysing use of online communication by governments worldwide, Hernon, Cullen and Relyea (2006, p. 3) note that most applications of information and communications technologies (ICTs) by governments are for delivery of information and services and in Australia a number of studies similarly report that electronic delivery of services have dominated governments' agenda (Geiselhart, 2004; Dunleavy, et al., 2008, p.13; Dugdale, et al., 2005).

However, an OECD *e-Government Studies* report (OECD, 2003a), while also noting that "most studies of e-government focus on the provision of online services" (p. 3), states under 'definitions' that "there are many definitions of e-government and lists three key elements of e-government including "service delivery and other internet-based activity such as e-consultation" and "the capacity to transform public administration through the use of ICTs" (p. 23). Inclusion of 'e-consultation' demonstrates fluidity in terminology and an emergent use of ICT, particularly via the internet, for public consultation and citizen engagement. Similarly, in an analysis of e-government in Australia, Sue Burgess and Jan Houghton, drawing on a federal Department of Communications, Technology and the Arts report, cite three broad goals of e-government as "citizen engagement, efficiency, and the effectiveness of service delivery" (2006, p. 84).

Increasingly scholars and the public sector are using terms such as *e-democracy* and *e-citizenship* to distinguish use of online communication for public consultation and citizen engagement in the public sphere and focussing on this use of the internet as well as online service delivery (eg. Gibson & Ward, 2008; Gibson, Lusoli & Ward, 2008). Ian Kearns defines e-democracy as "the use of Web technologies to engage citizens in debate, discussion, consultation and online voting" (2002, p. 11). This term is also used by the Department of Finance and Deregulation (2008) in Australia for its initiatives in relation to online policy consultation, although a conference organised by Senator Kate Lundy in 2009 as part of a series discussing the public sphere was titled 'Government 2.0: Policy and Practice in Australia' (Lundy, 2009), and the Federal Government has subsequently launched a 'Government 2.0 Taskforce' to investigate "Web 2.0 approaches to expand the uses of Commonwealth information and improve the way government consults and engages with citizens" (Tanner & Ludwig, 2009).

The importance and the extent of public consultation and citizen participation considered desirable are predicated on the model of democracy adopted and there are competing notions of democracy, as Peter Dahlgren (2009, p. 2) notes. While some categorise democracy as representational or direct, noted thinker on the public sphere, Jürgen Habermas (2006) contrasts liberal, republican and deliberative models. Liberal approaches privilege individual freedom, often adopting voluntary voting, and function by aggregating the views of private citizens largely through informally gauged public opinion. What Habermas calls the republican model most closely aligns with what others call representative democracy which involves political engagement primarily through representative elites. A deliberative approach, also discussed by David Held (2006), stresses the importance of active citizen engagement in thinking about political issues and expression of opinions (Habermas, 2006, pp. 411-3).

Habermas (1989, 2006) and Held (2006) argue that a deliberative form of democracy is preferable to republican or representative models as it involves a larger number of people which avoids representatives becoming a 'power elite' and it involves reflective thinking about issues by citizens. A key requirement for deliberative democracy, according to Habermas (1989), is a public sphere in which "citizens come together and confer freely about matters of general interest" and engage in "rational-critical debate" to become informed, contribute to political discourse, and reach consensus. Despite criticism for being a normative ideal, and elusiveness in its realisation, the concept of the public sphere has remained an enduring notion in contemporary democratic societies including Australia. Also, there is recognition of the desirability and even necessity of citizen engagement and participation in representational and republican models of democracy. While political communication studies grounded in political science have traditionally focussed on communication between formal actors in the political system, Gene Rowe and Lynn Frewer note that there is "a move away

from an elitist model … to one in which citizens have a voice" (2004, p. 513). Dahlgren (2009) similarly notes a shift in contemporary cultural theory, as well as much-critiqued public sphere theory, towards more open democracy.

The International Association for Public Participation (2004) five-level 'spectrum of public participation' calls for governments to inform, consult, involve, collaborate with, and empower citizens. While confirming information dissemination as one of the processes of government communication, this reflects contemporary thinking that consultation, involvement and collaboration are important for a healthy democracy.

Two benefits flow from broad-based public consultation and citizen engagement, according to the Centre for Policy Development. Director Miriam Lyons (personal communication, April 1, 2009) says wider citizen participation helps achieve the objectives of deliberative democracy and, second, the Centre argues that better policy will result from wider consultation and citizen participation. A number of scholars point to a lack of consistent and rigorous evaluation of expanded citizen engagement and participation as discussed later, which indicates that potential benefits need further substantiation. However, such analysis is beyond the scope of this study. Given the increased focus worldwide on online citizen consultation and participation, this research set out specifically to explore the approaches and practices being adopted.

Noting that politics in contemporary societies is largely mediated (Corner, 2007, p. 212; Dahlgren, 2009, p. 2; Louw, 2005, p. 140), a number of scholars including Garnham (1992), Grossberg et al. (2006, p. 379) and Howley (2007, pp. 343, 358) conclude that media constitute a key discursive space for the public sphere today and, with the growth of interactive social media, attention has turned to their capability to facilitate public consultation and citizen engagement in the public sphere.

As well as defining the system of democracy used as the basis of analysis, any discussion of online public consultation also needs to clarify what is meant by consultation. Within the public and political sector of Western democracies, consultation is quite specifically, and some say narrowly, conceptualised. In most contemporary democracies, consultation involves discussion with and consideration of the views of key representative groups and major 'political actors' such as industry associations, trade unions, lobbyists, and journalists (Habermas, 2006, p. 416). These consultations are usually conducted in a prescribed formal or semi-formal manner such as through written submissions, inquiries, hearings, reviews, and in meetings. Whereas formal consultation is largely monologic involving public submissions being presented and then considered asynchronously, or conducted through formal dialogue, in interactive online environments citizens expect a response, feedback and even debate synchronously (i.e. in real time), or at least within a short time frame. Furthermore, discussion in interactive online environments occurs in a dynamic, open-ended and often colloquial conversational way (Scoble & Israel, 2006). The interactions of Web 2.0 are located primarily in popular culture and have a more free-wheeling notion of consultation than largely elitist formal consultation processes. Brian McNair (as cited in Flew, 2008, p. 165) notes that the internet is a "more crowded, noisy, chaotic, competitive, and rancorous communications space than was envisaged for the modernist public sphere". However, given the stated commitment of governments to engage in online public consultation using Web 2.0 communication applications, it is necessary to accept the more open and informal nature of online dialogue that characterises these applications.

Analysis of Australian online consultation trials

Following its election, the Rudd Labor government tasked the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) to develop a detailed strategy for implementing online public consultation and participation. An AGIMO report *Consulting with Government – Online* was released in June 2008 (Australian Government Information Management Office, 2008). In July 2008 the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, Lindsay Tanner, announced the establishment of a trial government consultation blog to "give the online citizenry a chance to interact with the bureaucracy and make contributions to an area of government policy review" (Tanner, 2008).

The Australian Federal government subsequently launched three online consultation sites in December 2008: a public consultation blog hosted by the Department of Broadband, Communications and Digital Economy; the National Human Rights Online Consultation forum established by the Attorney-General's Department; and an online forum on early childhood education conducted by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

A three-person team of researchers from the University of Technology Sydney conducted an independent study of the planning, implementation and operation of the three online public consultation sites, as well as examining existing federal government department and agency Web sites involved in some level of online public consultation and engagement during the period August 2008 to March 2009. With e-democracy initiatives in their early stages of development, this research is ongoing and should be contextualised as an initial pilot study in this field. Nevertheless, it generated some interesting findings that inform future policy making and operationalisation of online public consultation and citizen engagement.

The research proceeded in three stages. First it collected data from federal government departments and agencies involved in online public consultation and citizen engagement. Second, to gain an independent perspective, it sought the views of several active commentators on public consultation processes, citizen engagement, and interactive online communication (i.e. Web 2.0). Third, it conducted comparative analysis with international initiatives and research in online public consultation and citizen engagement.

Methodology
While the study collected some quantitative data on site visitors and volume of postings, its primary objective was to gain qualitative insights into processes, experiences and outcomes in federal government online public consultation. Therefore, in the first stage, the researchers conducted depth interviews with key officials involved in planning and operationalising the three official online consultation trials, as well as existing sites involved in some form of online public consultation and citizen engagement, combined with qualitative content analysis of relevant sites. Given the relative 'newness' of interactive online consultation, all sites involved in online public consultation can be considered trials in a sense.

Given that the study's objectives were to examine active online consultation and citizen engagement projects, purposive sampling was used. Beyond the three departments involved in official trials, a snowballing approach was employed to identify other departments and agencies involved in online public consultation and citizen engagement. Senior officers in AGIMO and those involved in online public consultation developments within departments and agencies were readily able to identify others involved in similar initiatives as they maintain contact through an unofficial 'collegial' network.

The research commenced with in-depth discussions with senior officers in AGIMO, the agency responsible for e-government and online consultation, and progressed through depth interviews with senior officials responsible for online communication in 11 national government departments and agencies actively involved in some form of online public consultation, as listed in Appendix A. Interviewees comprised senior policy officers, Web masters and communication managers directly involved in online public consultation initiatives. Most interviews were conducted face to face on site in the organisations' offices and included or were followed by analysis of site content and relevant documents such as plans, policies, guidelines and procedures.

In the second stage, interviews were conducted with Dr Karin Geiselhart, a former adviser in the National Office for the Information Economy and co-author of the Democratic Audit of Australia report *Electronic Democracy: The Impact of New Communications Technology on Australian Democracy* (Chen, Gibson & Geiselhart, 2006); Professor Roger Clarke, visiting professor and consultant on information technology strategy and policy at the Australian National University; and Miriam Lyons, director of the Centre for Policy Development. The selection of these interviewees was somewhat subjective, but served to gain an independent view.

The third stage was implemented using a combination of interviews and literature research. This included discussions with Richard Allan, chair of the UK Power of Information Task Force following the Power of Information review (Mayo & Steinberg, 2007) and again following release of the Task Force's final report in early 2009 (UK Cabinet Office, 2009); William Perrin, former policy adviser on online strategy in the Policy Directorate of 10 Downing Street, an "e-champion" in the UK Public Service under the former UK Office of the e-Envoy, and secretary to the Power of Information Task Force; and Ben Self, technology director of the Democratic National Committee and one of the key people involved in President Obama's online election campaign. As well, the UK *Digital Dialogues* report (Miller & Williamson, 2008) , the UK Power of Information Task Force report (UK Cabinet Office, 2009), and reports from MIT's Deliberatorium experiments (Iandoli, Klein & Zolla, 2009; Klein, 2007; Klein et al., 2006) were analysed.

Research questions
Overall, this research was designed to identify how interactive internet media are being used by and within the Australian federal government for public consultation and facilitating citizen engagement in democratic processes, focussing on online public consultation trials conducted in late 2008 and early 2009, and other ongoing online public consultation and citizen engagement initiatives. Specific research questions pursued in this study included:

- What planning was undertaken in developing online public consultation initiatives?
- How were issues such as moderation, privacy, governance and resources addressed?
- What technology platforms are being used and why were these selected?
- What have been the experiences of those involved?
- What lessons have been learned from trials and initiatives to date?

This research did not examine the experiences of citizens participating in the online consultation initiatives studied and it is noted that this is an under-researched area, as reported by Rachel Gibson, Wainer Lusoli and Stephen Ward (2008) who conducted one of the few studies of the 'demand side' on online public consultation in 2005. This is an important area for future research.

Key findings

From this analysis, 10 key findings were identified, several of which include a number of sub-findings.

1. *Planning*

Planning was cited by all those involved in online consultation and by independent authorities as vitally important and foundational to the success or otherwise of projects. However, data gained from interviews, content analysis of consultation sites, and comparison with international experiences suggest that inadequate planning was undertaken in the Australian federal government's trial online public consultation initiatives.

The Australian Government Information Management Office (2008) has developed a set of online consultation guidelines as well as interim protocols which recommend that objectives, moderation, privacy, resourcing, and evaluation need to be considered in the early planning stages for online public consultation. All interview respondents agreed that the first stage of planning should clearly identify target participants and objectives of the consultation, including whether it is designed to function as a formal consultation process or in the more laissez-faire nature of online 'conversation' discussed earlier. The UK *Digital Dialogues* report (Miller & Williamson, 2008) found that "online engagement exercises with clear objectives have fared better than those with undefined goals", but this study found relatively imprecise objectives in online consultation initiatives. The issue of authorisation of public servants to comment publicly online is also a key issue for clarification during the early stages of planning online public consultation.

AGIMO officers and several departments that have launched online public consultation and citizen engagement initiatives strongly argue that planning should involve three key parties: senior policy officers, senior IT/Web staff, and communication staff. According to AGIMO, when initiatives are led by Web managers and IT staff without involvement of communication/public relations professionals, the results are technically efficient but not user-friendly. For instance, design and language are often functional but not attractive and easy to read and understand. When managers in IT or communication develop online consultation initiatives but senior policy officers are not involved and supportive, there is likely to be a lack of resources allocated to manage the site, a lack of processes for expediting response, and a lack of linkages to policy-making. The latter is most important. Without the active support and involvement of senior policy makers, public comments provided in good faith in expectation of consideration are likely to remain ignored. Senior policy maker involvement is essential to ensure online public consultation initiatives are not tokenism providing little more than cathartic experiences for citizens. Such approaches are widely condemned (Nelkin & Pollak, 1979; Fitzpatrick & White, 1997) and in the collaborative environment of Web 2.0 they are likely to be unmasked, resulting in citizen abandonment of consultation sites, and potentially resentment and even negative reactions.

Given low levels of citizen participation generally in politics, community life and media (Putnam, 2004), marketing and promotion may need to be carried out to make citizens aware of channels available, how to participate, and even to incentivise participation, and this needs to be considered in the planning stages as such activities require resources and involve a lead time. For instance, the UK central government offered £20,000 in prizes in its 'Show us the way' consultation project based on earlier experiences in which relatively low levels of participation were achieved. The MIT Deliberatorium (formerly called the Collaboratorium) uses contests in which teams are asked to competitively develop policy scenarios (Klein et al., 2006, p. 3).

Forrester Research's six-level Ladder of Participation estimates that only 13 per cent of US adults online are creators, compared with 52 per cent who are 'inactives' and 33 per cent who are 'spectators' (Li, 2006, 2007). Another industry study commissioned by Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group estimates that up to 90 per cent of internet users are 'lurkers', with only 10 per cent being active participants in interactive environments (Lange, Mitchell, Stewart-Weeks & Vila, 2008, p. 2). As W. J. McGuire (1989) noted, humans frequently act as "lazy organisms" and, particularly in information-rich environments in which they cannot cognitively process everything, they sometimes have to be "cognitive misers" (Taylor, 1981). Michael Schudson's (1998) concept of the *monitorial citizen* as an emerging norm in contemporary societies attests to the interest of citizens in civic life, but the inability or unwillingness of many to actively participate. This also suggests that realistic target participation levels should be set for online public consultation, noting the research literature in this field.

Measuring participation levels, ideally both quantitatively and qualitatively, is one aspect of evaluation which is frequently overlooked or inadequately undertaken in planning online public consultation, according to AGIMO and a number of researchers. Studies point to multiple approaches and complexities in evaluation (Abelson & Gauvin, 2006; Rowe & Frewer, 2004). For instance, evaluation can measure processes or outcomes and it can measure these from the perspective of citizens or policy makers. Whatever form of evaluation is used, evaluation criteria and methodology need to be established during planning so there is consensus on what constitutes success and so that data can be collected.

Selection of technology to be used, while important, should be one of the last planning considerations, made after target participants, objectives, resources, privacy, moderation, evaluation and other criteria have been decided, according to AGIMO and independent specialists. This does not appear to have been the case in federal government trials and autonomously organised public consultation and citizen engagement sites. The decision by the Minister for Broadband, Communications and Digital Economy, Stephen Conroy, to launch a public consultation blog was reportedly based on departmental planning workshops conducted in August and September 2008. However, the initial announcement by the Minister for Finance and Deregulation Lindsay Tanner in July 2008 already committed to a consultation "blog" (Tanner, 2008). The advantages and disadvantages of particular technologies are further discussed in the conclusions section of this paper.

2. *Controversial issues*
A second key finding of this research is that controversial issues can overtake and hijack online public consultation, resulting in much online discussion being 'off topic' and the consultation not achieving its objectives. While controversy may be unavoidable on some issues, careful thinking should occur about the timing of online public consultation. In all three of the Australian online public consultation trials, a simmering public issue threatened the functioning of the sites and achievement of their stated objectives. Only weeks prior to launch of the Department of Broadband, Communications and Digital Economy consultation blog, the department had announced a proposal to introduce internet filtering which attracted widespread criticism from media and groups such as The Australian Network for Art and Technology (2008) and Electronic Frontiers Australia (2008). This controversial proposal subsumed general discussion of broadband developments on the blog. For instance, under a headline stating 'Bloggers pan government's e-democracy bid', the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported: "Prominent Australian bloggers have lashed the Federal Government over its first attempt at public consultation via a blog, which has already been hijacked by critics of its plan to censor the internet" (Moses, 2008, para. 1). Similarly, the National Human Rights Online Consultation was targeted by a long-running campaign to introduce a Bill of Rights in

Australia and the Department of Employment and Work Relations online consultation open to teachers and educators specifically to discuss early childhood education was launched in the midst of the controversial collapse of the nation's largest childcare provider, ABC Learning Centres. The risk of controversial issues taking over and dominating public consultation forums needs to be carefully considered, as well as the potential for vested interests and the 'usual suspects' among political actors to hold the stage. In the extreme, discussion of controversial issues could lead to an attack on service, according to AGIMO Director of Online Technologies, Jacqui Begbie (personal communication, December 8, 2008). No evidence of a substantial attack on service in relation to an online public consultation was found in this research, but AGIMO believes that such contingencies need to be factored into developing plans and protocols.

3. Timeframe

Another key challenge in online public consultation identified by AGIMO and emphasised by overseas research is that online communication occurs in a much faster timeframe than traditional government-citizen communication. Whereas letters to government departments and agencies typically take several weeks or longer to process, online communicators expect a response within a day or even hours.

Public servants are finding themselves in a grey zone in the dynamic interactive world of online communication. Public Service rules and procedures in relation to Ministerial communications prescribe approval procedures that are unwieldy for online communication. In some cases, Public Servants are not authorised to comment publicly on any matter and must refer all questions and public comments to a senior departmental head or even a Minister. This inevitably imposes delays and can lead to frustration among citizens engaged in online discussion and even withdrawal from the process. Governments engaging in online public consultation need to establish specific processes as well as allocate specialist staff with authority to acknowledge and respond to public inquiries and comments online in a timely manner. The speed requirements of online communication necessitate new strategies such as fast-track approval procedures, authorisation of additional spokespersons on specific topics, and development of pre-prepared responses on a range of common questions and topics.

Also, when public servants are instructed to engage in online public consultation they need protection from political fall-out in the event that online discussions involve mistakes or incur the wrath of politicians or political parties in power. In a dynamic interactive online communication environment, participants have to 'think on their feet' and, while training and careful adherence to policy can minimise risks, it needs to be recognised that there are risks in more open consultation which need to be assessed, accepted and managed.

4. Resources

Requirements for planning, moderation, governance, IT support, spokespersons who can respond quickly to online questions and discussion, evaluation, and analysis of potentially large volumes of text to identify key themes and areas of consensus have significant resource implications. While efficiency gains can be made in reducing the number of disparate Web sites and adopting streamlined government access such as recommended by the UK Power of Information Task Force review (Mayo & Steinberg, 2007), a number of important functions in online public consultation require additional specialist resources.

A key consideration in resourcing is that both outbound and inbound stages need to be addressed. While all federal government departments and agencies studied considered and made some allocation of resources for establishing online consultation sites and for distributing information about the site, little consideration is given in most cases to

processing incoming information. If governments implement public consultation with a genuine commitment to listen to and consider citizens' views, as is desirable, rather than as tokenism or a façade of engagement, specific consideration needs to be given to how citizens' contributions will be processed, analysed and articulated into policy-making processes. In major online public consultation initiatives when listening can involve many thousands of Web posts and possibly e-mails and other communications, dedicated staff are required to acknowledge, code, categorise, process and respond to public comments, complaints, suggestions and recommendations. These processes are further discussed in key finding nine.

5. Culture

In this research, only two interviewees commented specifically on culture as a key issue. Former AGIMO executive, Karen Geiselhart (personal communication, August 20, 2008) is sceptical that true e-democracy will emerge from current government initiatives. She argues that entrenched practices and bureaucracy in the administrative echelons of government will stymie attempts to open up public consultation to a wider citizenry. Nor is the bureaucracy likely to be flexible in the type of input that is accepted, she believes. She says the public service needs to "loosen up", but believes this will require a large cultural shift that most are disinclined to make, preferring instead to cling to a control paradigm of communication and carefully framed and managed consultation.

ANU visiting professor Roger Clarke (personal communication, December 9, 2008) says the Australian Public Service views consultation as a constraint and believes that institutional barriers will block any effective extension or widening of public consultation. In fact, Clarke warns that government departments and agencies may become less accessible to public interest groups and civil society because of online public consultation. He expresses a fear that departments and agencies will claim that online public consultation sites such as blogs fulfil their consultation obligations and reduce their active commitment to consultation.

Culture is raised as a major finding because, in addition to these minority views by independent critics, it is cited as a key factor by chair of the UK Power of Information Task Force Richard Allan (2009) and by veteran UK public sector "e-champion" William Perrin (2009) who believes that changing the culture within the public service will be a prerequisite for effective online public consultation and citizen engagement. However, Allan and Perrin are more optimistic than Australian critics cited, saying that "exemplars" such as the highly popular Fix My Street initiative in the UK (www.fixmystreet.com) can be used to inspire and engineer change. In addition, they cite the importance and effectiveness of evangelists within government to champion expansion of public consultation to create a more participatory democracy. While not identifying a formal structure of 'e-champions' within the Australian Public Service, this research did find considerable enthusiasm and commitment to more open public consultation using online forums within AGIMO and several federal government departments and agencies and also notes that Minister Tanner is author of *Open Australia* (Tanner, 1999), a book outlining a vision for open government and citizen engagement. These factors suggest an emerging environment conducive to cultural change.

6. Design and navigation

International studies have revealed government Web interfaces to be a maze of often poorly interconnected sites named and structured in a way that requires an understanding of the workings of government. For instance, the UK Power of Information Task Force review (Mayo & Steinberg, 2007) reported the existence of more than 3,000 UK central government Web sites. The Task Force recommended reducing this to 1,000 sites.

Online public consultation and participation initiatives need to offer easily navigable and user-friendly environments. At a macro level, requiring citizens to understand the structure of government and provide their contributions in the correct departmental or topic forum erects a substantial barrier to participation, according to Richard Allan (2008). At a micro level, design should ensure easy-to-follow layout, features for users with disabilities such as a facility to increase font size for the vision-impaired, and consideration of multiple languages. Online public consultation in relation to the National Human Rights Consultation was found in this research to be poorly designed and difficult to navigate. The National Human Rights Consultation initiative, primarily comprised of face-to-face workshops and seminars held around Australia, was extended online from January to 26 June 2009. The consultation was conducted by an independent National Human Rights Consultation Committee appointed by the Attorney-General, not through the Australian Human Rights Commission which also reports to the Attorney-General and is a long-established and well-known organisation. Many citizens could be expected to go to the Human Rights Commission Web site to find information and participate in consultation. However, clicking a link to 'Consultation Electronic Forum' on the home page of the Australian Human Rights Commission Web site linked to an article written by Fr Frank Brennan, chair of the National Human Rights Consultation Committee, on the independent 'think-tank' blog *Open Forum* (www.openforum.com.au/NHROC).

It was not apparent to visitors that *Open Forum* was hosting the online consultation on behalf of the Federal Government. In the *Open Forum* article, the only link to engage in online consultation was located in the text near the bottom of the page. It linked to http://www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au, a page of introductory information inviting visitors to "Share your views by participating in an 'Online Consultation'" in which a further link sent visitors to another page of general information also titled "Share your views" (www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/www/nhrcc/nhrcc.nsf/Page/ShareYourViews_National HumanRightsOnlineConsultation). Here, confusingly, a link to 'National Human Rights Online Consultation' sent site visitors back to *Open Forum* (see Figure 1). It took the researchers up to seven clicks to reach a Web page where a citizen could provide comment on human rights and, on average, the researchers visited three Web sites before locating the online public consultation interface.

Figure 1. HTML code on the Human Rights Commission Web site page titled 'Share your views – National Human Rights Online Consultation' showing the link sending citizens to the independent 'Open Forum' blog.

Upon finally locating the cyber-room where online consultation could occur, citizens were confronted with a relatively unwelcoming form as shown in Figure 2. This required extensive personal details to be entered in a number of compulsory fields before up to 20,000 characters could be typed or pasted into a small scroll box. Independent specialists interviewed described the form as "formal" "stiff" and "off-putting" and the navigation path to reach the form as "torturous".

Figure 2. The National Human Rights Online Consultation Web interface.

Complicating navigation further for citizens was that the Attorney-General's department Web site referred to and provided a link to the 'Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission', even though the commission has been renamed the Australian Human Rights Commission. The former HREOC site has been rebranded as the Australian Human Rights Commission, although its Web site address remains www.hreoc.gov.au which could be confusing for citizens unfamiliar with ever-changing government nomenclature.

Online specialists and commentators also criticised the presentation of the Department of Broadband, Communications and Digital Economy blog launched by Senator Conroy such as this comment from *APC* magazine:

> People expect blogs to have a certain look and feel. They present short updates, have a clean, simple and uncluttered navigation system, and invite reader comments. They also have features to help readers dig up useful content, such as 'most read' and 'most commented' posts. Senator Conroy's 'blog' is little more than articles on the department's cumbersome, formally designed website, with the ability for people to post comments underneath them. It is, in other words, just like any other government public consultation, except you can post your submission in a comment form rather than emailing or posting it (Warne, 2008).

7. *Language*

A further finding of this research closely related to culture and useability is that language can pose a substantial barrier to effective online public consultation and citizen engagement. Melbourne blogging consultant, Darren Rowse, says the Australian government's first trial blog looked "very governmental" and he predicted that it would "struggle to build a connection with readers". He says the official look and feel, formal writing style and existence of 'terms of use' and a 'moderation policy' "killed some of the spontaneity, playfulness and personal nature of blogging" (as cited in Moses, 2008, para. 7, 11).

Satire, parody, spoofs and even ridicule have been widely used forms of political expression (Macnamara, 2008; Street, 2001). Stephen Coleman observes that historically "democracy … is rooted in expressive, cathartic, and carnivalesque practices that connect public policy to mundane culture. But the e-citizenship projects we have explored tend to be characterised by an earnest solemnity" (2008, p. 203). This was apparent in the case of the Australian federal government's three online public consultation trials.

The language of citizen consultation and participation in open Web 2.0 environments needs to be the language of people. While it is likely to be in the public interest and a public expectation that obscene and highly offensive content is not admitted or removed from sites, slang, colloquialisms, humour, parody, satire, poor grammar and even occasional expletives are part of popular culture. So increasingly is texting which has its own shorthand vernacular, videos including mash-ups, 'Photoshopped' images, remixed music and *cybergraffiti*.

Addressing cultural and social issues such as format and language is particularly important in engaging youth. David Buckingham (2000) reports that children and youth "find the language of politics unfamiliar and uninvolving compared with the immediacy offered by popular entertainment" and Liesbet Van Zoonen proposes that the popularizing of political communication should be seen as an attempt to restore the relationship between politicians and voters (1998, pp. 196-7). The same could be said for the processes of government generally. Stephen Coleman says that "official strictures about what constitutes respectable (and respect-worthy) political participation have the effect of narrowing the repertoire of political citizenship" to formal, highly structured forms of engagement unsuited to many people today (as cited in Earl & Schussman, 2008, p. 73). In future, citizen consultation and participation may need to be conducted using SMS text messages, Instant Messaging, Twitter, in groups within social network sites, and in Second Life, and must adopt the tone, style and formats of those forms of communication if it is to gain citizen support, particularly among younger demographics.

8. *Government or third party hosting*

A major consideration for government in undertaking online public consultation and encouraging civic engagement is whether to host the consultation site or leverage existing online discussion sites. In the context of formal consultation processes, government hosted sites are considered mandatory given protocols and procedures in relation to submissions, deadlines, security, privacy and other issues. However, in the broader concept of consultation proposed as necessary for online public consultation, there is a strong argument that government should go to the people rather than making people come to it.

This view has limited support within the Australian public service. However, monitoring, listening, and even participating in third party sites, as well as opening up government information and data to third party applications, are strongly endorsed by the UK Power of Information Task Force report. Several arguments are presented in favour of opening up government consultation beyond formal government sites.

First, at a pragmatic level it makes sense to utilise existing popular sites for consultation and citizen engagement. In the UK, the Power of Information Task Force identified NetMums as an example of an existing organisation with 500,000 members actively involved in discussing issues of concern and importance to UK mothers. Initiatives by the UK government to communicate with mothers met with limited success, whereas engaging in an existing popular site accesses a substantial, widely representative and motivated citizenry. In Australia, major online groups such as GetUp have in excess of 300,000 members and are active in expressing views on various issues. There are risks in such engagements where third party organisations have their own agendas. However, directly listening to and participating in public discussion on such sites is more transparent than relying on views filtered through the executive staff of lobby groups and can be more balanced than discussions held without any government representative.

A second reason for government departments and agencies to participate in public forums hosted by third parties is that discursive practices within government sites inevitably remain bound by a significant imbalance in power relationships which can limit both participation levels and the effectiveness of government-hosted and managed online consultation sites.

Stephen Coleman refers to two types of online citizenship as *managed e-citizenship* and *autonomous e-citizenship* and concludes that there can be "conflict between the two faces of e-citizenship" (2008, p. 192). He says a key policy question for governments is "are they in favour of merely promoting participation on their own terms or are they prepared to commit to a policy of democratic participation?" (p. 202). As Coleman says, it is not a case of one or the other. Rather democratic societies can benefit from "a productive convergence between these two models of … citizenship" (p. 201).

The UK Power of Information Task Force report (UK Cabinet Office, 2009) recommends opening up government even further through departments and agencies adopting a "backstage" approach – that is, supplying information and data to third parties to build applications for citizens. These may address both online consultation as well as service delivery. A key benefit of outsourcing government information and data to third parties, obviously with restrictions to protect privacy, is that third parties can combine several data sets or government services to provide innovative new applications for citizens. The UK Power of Information Task Force instances mapping data which can be combined with a range of other data such as health services, transport, property and so on to create new ways for citizens to engage with government.

9. Sense-making tools
Gaining the cooperation of potentially large groups of disparate users in discussion and argument without it dissolving into confusion and conflict is a major challenge in planning online citizen consultation. Furthermore, making sense of the disparate and fragmented information and viewpoints contributed represents a substantial challenge for both citizens participating in online consultation and for governments in processing and acting on citizens' contributions post-consultation. Long-standing US government adviser and author of *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History* Philip Bobbit makes an important point that increasing citizen engagement and participation without mechanisms to process and act on their inputs, leads to a situation where "there will be more public participation in government but it will count for less" (2003, p. 234). In a key-note speech in Australia recently, Nick Couldry (2009) elaborated: "we do not just need a participatory democracy; we need a participatory democracy where participation matters".

AGIMO has identified a need for data mining and text analysis tools to process contributions received from citizens participating in online consultation, and is investigating a number of software applications to assist in making sense of the thousands or even millions of words of text that can be received in popular online consultation sites. However, sense making in online consultation requires much more than data mining and text analysis tools.

An online experimental research project at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology initially called The Collaboratorium (Klein, 2007) and renamed The Delberatorium in 2008 (Iandoli, Klein & Zolla, 2009, p. 70) gives useful insights into the approach and modes of communication that need to be employed to gain and maintain citizen engagement and for both users and the sponsors to effectively participate in large-scale online consultation. In reporting on an online climate change forum conducted in what was then called The Collaboratorium, Klein (2007) and Klein, Malone, Sterman and Quadir (2006) identify a number of requirements for sense making in online public consultation. They summarise five key requirements for effective online engagement: careful design of the rules of interaction; 'seeding' of discussions with "an initial corpus of policy options and pointers" to stimulate discussion; a "committed community of contributors and expert judges"; voting systems which provide citizens with simple quick ways of contributing; and tools for collating and assessing well-structured arguments.

Mark Klein (2007) who works with the MIT Center for Collective Intelligence and has been extensively involved in the MIT Collaboratorium/Deliberatorium project warns that large-scale interactions to date through online applications such as e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms, blogs and wikis "have been incoherent and dispersed, contributions vary widely in quality, and there has been no clear way to converge on well-supported decisions". He cites problems in online discussion including a "low signal to noise ratio", "balkanization" as users self-assemble into groups that share the same opinions, "dysfunctional argumentation" and "hidden consensus" that is lost in the volume of comments and viewpoints.

In a 2009 paper, Iandoli, Klein and Zolla note that very few attempts have been made to support large, diverse and geographically dispersed groups in systematically exploring and coming to decisions about complex and controversial issues (2009, p. 69). They say that, while large-scale online organisation using low-cost technologies has achieved outstanding results in knowledge creation, sharing and accumulation, "current technologies such as forums, wikis and blogs … appear to be less supportive of knowledge organisation, use and consensus formation" (p. 70). In short, current online communication tools and approaches are effective in collecting and sharing information and knowledge, but when issues are complex, controversial and a matter of widespread argument, Iandoli, Klein and Zolla say "little progress has been made … in providing virtual communities with suitable tools and mechanisms for collective decision-making".

Three types of argumentation tools have been identified as important in the MIT Deliberatorium, based on de Moor's and Aakhus' (2006) argumentation support model – sharing tools, funnelling tools and argumentation tools. In a report of trials conducted by The Deliberatorium, Klein (2007) says that system design should include aids such as articles for users to read to become familiar with issues, ideas and for and against views before participating; 'argument maps' to locate ideas and arguments on a given topic grouped or linked together; and simple tools for users to search, add comments, rate, and vote on articles and ideas, as well as post new articles. Also, Klein says editors or moderators are essential in the process to provide immediate feedback to users such as simple 'thank you' acknowledgements of contributions. The view is supported by experiences from the Obama presidential election campaign in the US. Ben Self (personal communication, February 16,

2009) says a very small team of specialists – less than 10 – processed all online communication with citizens during the 2008 presidential campaign and one of the key strategies that made this possible was the use of 'placeholders' and pre-prepared stock responses that could be mass e-mailed or personalised with minor customisation. Klein (2007) also advocates a logical 'argument mapping' structure that harvests the best ideas from open discussion and displays these in 'argument maps'. In a 2009 report on research in the MIT Delberatorium, Iandoli, Klein and Zolla note that a large body of research is available on argument analysis and structure including philosophical inquiries such as the New Rhetoric of Perelman, the Informal Logic of Toulmin and Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action, as well as artificial intelligence and computer science approaches such as the Argument Interchange Format which uses a RDF (Resource Description Framework) schema based on a Semantic Web ontology language (2009, pp. 75-8). These issues are technically complex and illustrate a need for Web designers and programmers, communication advisers, and policy-makers to work closely together in planning and developing online public consultation projects. International research suggests that successful online consultation and participation requires much more than setting up a blog or wiki.

The MIT Deliberatorium project which is ongoing has drawn on a number of models and approaches and integrated elements of the IBIS (Issue Based Information System) model (Conklin 2006), Toulmin's (1959) argument analysis structure, and the concept of argument schemes proposed by Walton (1989, 2006). The IBIS approach presents and tracks arguments by presenting (1) questions, (2) ideas which proffer possible solutions or explanations, and (3) pro/con arguments for each. The resulting framework of argument is developed and represented visually as 'tree' structures using specialist software that has been developed – albeit still in its early stages. The Toulmin approach involves presenting (1) a series of key claims, (2) the grounds for each such as supporting facts and opinions of influential people, (3) warrants which demonstrate how the grounds support the claims and (4) qualifiers which are statements that limit or prescribe the validity of claims (eg. words such as 'occasionally', 'usually', 'based on best available evidence'). Walton's scheme theory can be used by readers "to recognise and classify arguments proposed by users and check if critical questions are adequately answered, and to help authors check if their arguments are defendable with respect to the critical questions and, if not, to revise [them]" (Iandoli, Klein & Zolla (2009, p. 77). Drawing on the IBIS, Toulmin and Walton approaches, the MIT Deliberatorium experiment provides users tools and resources to guide them in presenting arguments and then presents arguments in summarised, contextualised and categorised forms that users can follow and understand using short text summaries and graphics such as *argument nets*.

Figure 3 provides a summary of the key steps and requirements for both government managers of online consultation sites and participating citizens based on this research as well as findings from experimental studies in the MIT Deliberatorium and learnings from the 2008 US presidential campaign which used online communication extensively.

Government Requirements	Citizens Requirements
Monitoring (listening)	Background reading (eg. sidebars, links)
Stock responses, placeholders	Simple voting and seconding
Data/text mining	Editors' summaries
Categorising (grouping ideas and arguments)	Categorising (grouping ideas and arguments)
Argumentation software	Argumentation software

Figure 3. Key requirements of government and citizens in online public consultation.

10. Communities of Practice and Communities of Interest

While a key finding of this research is that online public consultation can be overwhelmed and hijacked by controversial issues making rational debate difficult if not impossible, an equally important finding is that within particular communities of practice and communities of interest consultation can proceed relatively smoothly and productively.

Arts and cultural organisations are among leaders in the field of Web 2.0 use for public engagement in terms of communities of practice and communities of interest. Dr Lynda Kelly at the Australian Museum has created Musuem 3.0, a Ning social network for those interested in the future of cultural institutions (http://museum30.ning.com). In addition to using Ning, the museum publishes blogs, has a Facebook site for communicating with alumni, a YouTube channel, a Flickr site, and uses Twitter extensively to engage communities and visitors in conversations. Kelly says interactive communication tools help the museum establish conversations and "build community" (personal communication, December 10, 2008).

The Australian War Memorial has joined *The Commons*, an international Flickr community established by Brooklyn Museum and now supported by around 30 museums, libraries and archive holders internationally. In a 2008 trial, the AWM selected 30 historic photos from its collection of 900,000 images on its Web site and posted these to *The Commons* Flickr site. The photos that had been viewed 950 times in the previous 12 months were viewed 15,500 times in just one month on The Commons Flickr site (November 2008). In interviews, Web Manager, Liz Holcombe says "we have been posting photos on the Australian War Memorial Web site for 10 years, but it has got nothing on Flickr, YouTube, etcetera" (personal communication, December 8, 2008). The AWM has engaged the public by also posting photos taken by people visiting historic sites such as Australians visiting Gallipoli on Anzac Day and uses blogs both internally and externally. The memorial also has established a Facebook page, posts videos to YouTube, and launched a Ning site in 2008.

However, an interesting structural problem that this and other arts and cultural institutions have encountered is that YouTube is banned in many schools. Even some universities block or slow down the speed of internet connections so that YouTube videos are not able to be viewed. This denies students access to these resources, as many cultural institutions do not have the bandwidth required for streaming video from their own servers and rely on public services such as YouTube. This illustrates a lag in cultural practices and policies in relation to emergent media and communication.

Other government departments using online public consultation and citizen engagement include the Australian Taxation Office which uses blogs, a wiki, and established an online community of practice within www.govdex.gov.au in early 2009 for its Large Business Advisory Group and intends to extent this to other groups; Austrade which targets small to medium businesses with a blog and a Facebook presence; and the Australian Bureau of Statistics which is using blogs and experimenting with other interactive communication tools. ABS is supportive of the 'backstage' concept of making its data available to third party applications.

The ATO has developed a large database of Frequently Asked Questions with pre-approved responses and statements. While not able to predict every citizen inquiry and comment, from its experience in providing spokespersons for talk-back radio and the resources of its call centre which handles 20 million telephone calls a year, the ATO is prepared for a wide range of public discussion. When pre-prepared responses are not available, 'place markers' are used to 'buy time', such as a message stating 'Thank you for your ideas. They will be carefully considered and we will respond online by [insert time or date]'.

The quadrivium of policy, culture, resources, technology

Findings from this research can be grouped into four key areas of focus. A significant number of the issues discusssed relate to policy decisions, including identifying clear objectives and target participants; involvement of senior policy, IT and communication staff; timing; moderation; forms of input and language that are acceptable; authorisation of staff to speak publicly; hosting (government or third party); articulation into policy-making processes; and evaluation. Some 70 per cent of the findings of this research relate to policy and planning. Second, major international studies and experiences, as well as the views of independent critics, point to the importance of culture and the need for cultural change. It can be argued that these two areas need to be prioritised, as without the necessary policy framework and a supportive culture in place, no amount of resources or technology can make online public consultation effective. With these in place, resources are then required and these include specialist skills which may require investment in training and development, as well as additional staff and financial investment. While technology receives most attention in many discussions of online communication, analysis of research findings into broad disciplinary areas shows that technology is the fourth area for address in this quadrivium.

Political science professor Jeffrey Johnson warns that "efforts to create e-democracy do not necessarily enhance liberal democratic politics, tending instead toward illiberal politics because of the underlying technological culture of e-democracy" (2006, p. 85). This focus needs to be shifted in the directions indicated by this research. This view is supported by an OECD report, *Promise and Problems of E-Democracy*, which states: "the barriers to greater online citizen engagement in policy-making are cultural, organisational and constitutional not technological" (OECD, 2003b, p. 9).

When decisions are made on technology, a number of limitations of Web platforms and applications used in trial and pioneering online public consultation need to be recognised. Blogs, as well as online forums and even Twitter, can be effective as an open channel for canvassing ideas and topics for discussion (eg. what issues are concerning people). However, blogs are unsuitably structured to serve as the repository of a large amount of information which others need to access and in which they usually wish to find specific issues and topics. Roger Clarke is highly critical of blogs as on online consultation platform, saying "the technology is all wrong … blogs are dysfunctional" (personal communication, December 9, 2008). While blogs can be made more easily navigable using folksonomies such as tag clouds, their reverse chronological linear structure means that content on the same topic contributed by different citizens at different times is fragmented and cannot be reorganised into categories. In this respect, wikis offer a more manageable and easily navigable technology. However, wikis can be complex for citizens unfamiliar with online environments. Major online public consultation projects will benefit from a purpose-designed database to serve as the central content repository, with a number of layers established in the processes of contributing and accessing information from the central repository. These layers include moderation, initial acknowledgement, categorisation and structuring of arguments, and provision of editors' summaries by specialist trained staff. As well, Figure 4 illustrates the importance of background reading available outside of the discussion forum for participants to access prior to making contributions which improves the quality of discussion. Furthermore, it illustrates the importance of building a layer for articulating the main findings from online public consultation and citizen engagement to the policy-making process. Otherwise, widely held views and the best ideas of citizens remain orphaned in some database or Web archive.
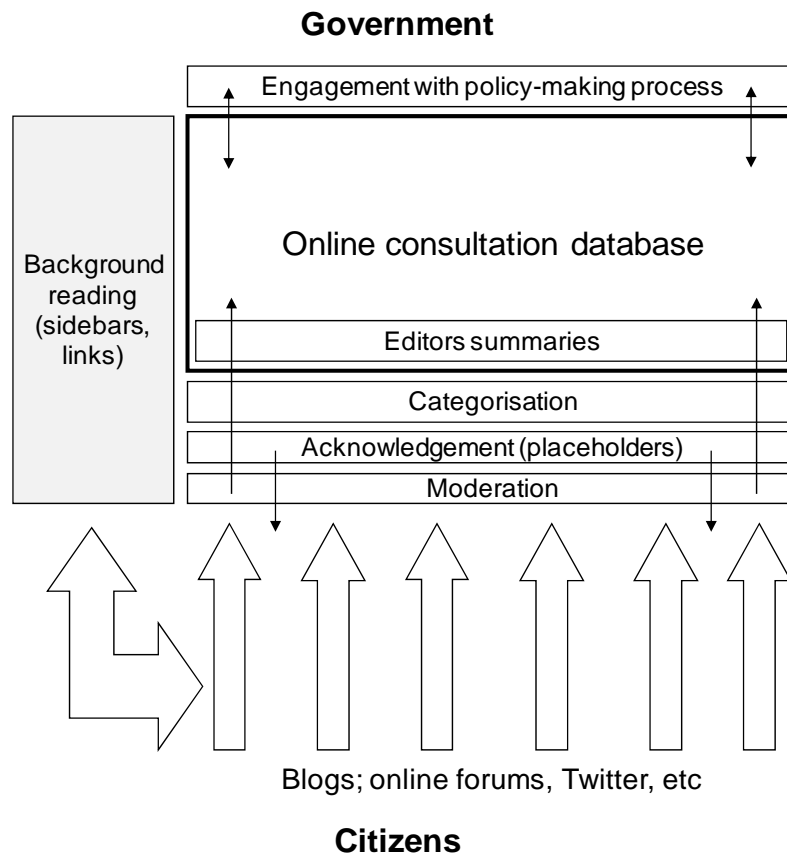
Government

Figure 4. A model of key steps and layers in online public consultation.

Open online consultation and citizen engagement in future may require governments to accept and consider citizen communication via SMS text messages, Instant Messaging, Twitter, Second Life, and in other forms. There is no agreed single solution. Rather, than a one size fits all approach, careful planning will suggest the most appropriate mix of technologies to meet objectives and the needs of specific participants.

As well, online public consultation needs to be seen as a complement to rather than a replacement for traditional forms of consultation. An Australian Communications and Media Authority (2008) report on online participation notes that 2.6 million Australians do not use the internet at home and 13 per cent of all Australians aged 14 years and over have never used the internet. As Stephen Coleman and Jay Blumler (2009) conclude in *The Internet and Democratic Citizenship*, the potential for the internet to support democracy is substantial, but considerable work still needs to be done.

The trivium or core of democratic politics remains language (grammar), rhetoric, and argument through the dialectic and much of this will continue to be through traditional political processes and channels. For *e-democracy* or *government 2.0* to succeed and complement these processes, disciplinary focus needs to turn to the quadrivium of policy, culture, resources and technology.

Appendix A.

INTERVIEWEES

Organisation	Interviewees
Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO)	Jacqui Begbie, Director Online Technologies Paul Bambury, Government 2.0 Secretariat Fran Ballard
Department of Broadband, Communications & Digital Economy	Mia Garlick – Assistant Secretary, Digital Economy Roger Coogan – Manager, Digital Economy Analysis & Environment Policy Vikas Jayaram – Policy Officer, Digital Economy
Attorney-General's Department	Gareth Davis *(unsuccessful)* *(See Human Rights Commission)*
Australian Human Rights Commission	Leon Wild, Web Manager
Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations	Robyn Cooper, Director Early Childhood Education Quality Section
Department of Innovation, Industry, Science & Research	Diana Martinez
Australian Bureau of Statistics	Andrew Mair
Austrade	Edwin Kuller, Web Channel Manager
Australian Taxation Office	Doreen Blevins Simon Blankenstein Mark Stockwell Carmel Nugent
Australian War Memorial	Liz Holcombe, Web Manager
Australian Museum	Dr Lynda Kelly, Head of Audience Research
CSIRO	Sylvia Bell Jane Kahler *(uncompleted)*
Young Australians Rural Network (YARN)	Helen Thompson
Australian National University and consultant on information technology strategy and policy	Professor Roger Clarke
Co-author of the Democratic Audit of Australia report *Electronic Democracy: The Impact of New Communications Technology on Australian Democracy* (Chen, Gibson & Geiselhart, 2006) and formerly AGIMO and Department of Broadband, Communications & Digital Economy consultant	Dr Karin Geiselhart
UK Cabinet Office Power of Information Task Force	Richard Allan, Chair William Perrin, Secretary
US Democratic National Committee (President Obama campaign)	Ben Self, Technology Director (Director, Blue State Digital)
Centre for Policy Development	Miriam Lyons, Director Barry Saunders, Research Coordinator

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[1] *Jim Macnamara PhD, FPRIA, FAMI, CPM, FAMEC is Professor of Public Communication and Director of the Australian Centre for Public Communication at the University of Technology Sydney. Before joining academia he had a distinguished 30-year career in professional communication practice spanning journalism, public relations, advertising and media research including a decade heading the Asia Pacific office of global media research firm, CARMA International.*

[2] *Vicki Bamford is a lecturer in public communication at University of Technology Sydney with a background in public relations practice. She spent 12 years working as a consultant specialising in the corporate sector, but also working with state and federal governments in developing information campaigns for health, employment and training, police, and primary industries.*

[3] *Judy Betts is a lecturer in public communication at University of Technology Sydney with a background in the public sector as well as corporate communication. She previously worked as an adviser with several federal ministers and in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in Canberra. She holds a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard University.*