Panel 1: 11am-12.30pm

Frontline delivery of employment services under the influence of New Public Management and welfare conditionality

Tran Nguyen

This paper examines the frontline delivery of employment services in Australia. Based on qualitative interviews with frontline staff in the Australian employment services providers, this research is significant as it sheds further light on welfare implementation at the local level. It also addresses a gap in the current literature which tends to reflect the execution of welfare policies from the lens of welfare clients rather than of frontline staff. This paper begins by analysing the current conflicts between staff’s client-centre focus and their providers’ objectives which are substantially mediated by the New Public Management orthodoxy. It then presents three main patterns of interaction between frontline staff and clients within the service delivery process. The first deals with staff’s increasing scrutiny and surveillance over clients. The second analyses staff’s expanding harassment and sanctions against clients. The third evaluates staff’s heightened control over clients’ employment prospects. This paper argues that the application of New Public Management and the reinforcement of welfare conditionality in the employment services sector have adversely influenced the quality of employment services delivered at the frontline and increased social tensions between staff and welfare clients.

Strategic policies: exposing the attributes of policies that aim to ‘coordinate’ the national interest

Nadeem Samnakay

Governments frequently develop policies that attempt to set a strategic agenda. I look at a small set of diverse policies that I term as ‘strategic policies’. Strategic policies share attributes of being cross sectoral, primarily principles-based and often dealing with complex problems. Further, at the national scale, strategic policies require cooperation from State and Territory governments in order to achieve effective implementation, primarily because of the Federal government’s constitutional limits and partly because of the cross-sectoral and complex nature of problems being addressed.
Strategic policies are variously titled as frameworks, initiatives, plans, roadmaps, strategies or agreements - sometimes interchangeably so. Despite their prevalence, the process for how strategic policies are developed and implemented in Australia is unclear and this paper makes a foundational step to build understanding of their characteristics and approaches for their development.

Five policies are investigated as an initial exploration. The National Competition Policy, the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, the Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure, Australia in the Asian Century and the National Food Plan. A heuristic is presented to compare and contrast these policies and to expose the vagaries of strategic policies. It is postulated that the process for development has some bearing on implementation success, but that there are fundamental elements that need to be embodied in future strategic policies in order to be successfully implemented. Key success features, once developed would aid in evaluating strategic policies, many of which purport to be important for national welfare. An initial exploration will provide insights to a particular niche of policies that have implications for ‘the national interest’.

What is the purpose of aboriginal land reform in the Northern Territory: privileging the authority choice account

Trang Dang

When the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act (Cth) was enacted in 1977 it was the first statutory scheme to enable Aboriginal people to make land claims based on their traditional connection to land. Under the Act, a new form of title—inalienable freehold communal title—was created in recognition of the incompatibility between Aboriginal rights to land and western notions of individual property rights. Forty years on, successive federal governments have introduced and implemented reforms to enable the customary communal tittle of land under the Act to be formally converted into individual titles. The official objectives of the recent reforms were to enable economic development, private investment and home ownership on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory. A number of scholars have sought to explain the shift from customary communal title to formal individual titles. These scholars, mainly from the legal-political field, have focused on the official objectives of the reforms and the (in)ability of the reforms to deliver on the official objectives.

This paper assesses the current scholarship against three approaches developed by Hal Colebatch to analyse policy making; firstly, the ‘authoritative choice’ account which presents policy as, effectively, the outcomes of decisions made by central authorities; ‘the structured interaction’ account which presents policy outcomes as being mediated between the different policy players, and, lastly, the ‘problematisation’ account which examines the discourses employed to justify policy problems and policy solutions. The paper argues that while the ‘authoritative choice’ account employed by scholars up to date has made notable contributions to understanding the objectives of the reforms, future research would benefit from employing the ‘structured interactions’ and ‘problematisation’
accounts to undercover the objectives of a policy area in which the official accounts can conceal as much as they reveal.

**Panel 2: 1.30pm-3pm**

**Not the remotest idea: New Public Management and placed based policy in Indigenous Affairs**

**Prue Brown**

Governments have been experimenting for some time with bottom-up, place based, community development type approaches for complex social policy issues. Nowhere has this experimentation been more apparent than in remote Indigenous Australia. The most recent example is the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery (RSD). The subsequent evaluation of the initiative found some success in encouraging governments to work better together, but limited success in developing community capacity and in improving life outcomes for residents in the 29 communities.

This paper will contend that this partly because place based approaches require public servants to engage deeply with stakeholders in developing solutions which take account of, and are relevant for, the local context. The structural barriers to these ways of working, such as the need for devolution of accountability and decision making, as well as more flexible approaches to funding and resourcing, are well documented and studied. However, this paper will look at the role of policy agents. In particular, it will examine some of the inherent tensions between the mindsets required under New Public Management and the ways of working required to develop and implement contextualized local solutions.

Drawing on interviews with senior policy agents involved in the development and implementation of RSD, this paper will look at the tensions between the new ways of working required and the managerialist regime of accountability which sees deliverables as paramount. It will also look the how the prevalent ‘theory of change’ that prioritises ‘best practice’ over context mitigates against local solutions. Finally, it will examine how the focus on upward accountability contributes to a lack of recognition of Indigenous Australians as anything more than abstract objects subject to government intervention.

**Trust and control in public sector contracts with the not-for-profit sector**

**Jennifer Mason**

Publicly funded human services in Australia and comparable OECD countries are increasingly outsourced, under forms of contractual arrangement, to the not-for-profit (NFP) sector. The policy settings for such contracting use the language of networks, partnership, and collaboration, consistent with a stewardship approach (Dicke and Ott 2002; Brown, Potoski and Van Slyke 2007;
Van Puyvelde et al (2012). Little research has been undertaken to date about the wider accountability and oversight environment within which public managers operate, and how this might impact upon the contracts that they negotiate and administer. Through analysis of interviews with 50 key political and administrative decision makers, this paper describes a complex public accountability environment focused on compliance, audit, and control; characteristics of an agency, rather than a stewardship, approach. The paper argues that this risk focused oversight environment is highly influential in shaping decision making about contracting, particularly performance management. The paper concludes by considering the implications of these findings for current reform initiatives, particularly commissioning and outcome-based contracting.

**Constructing co-design: Public servants’ perspectives on the purpose and implementation of citizen engagement practices**

**Rebecca Santos**

As western democracies and their public services navigate paradigmatic shifts from New Public Management to Public Value Management, they look to improve citizen engagement in policymaking and service design and delivery.

This paper looks at one specific form of citizen engagement, co-design: the systematic pursuit of collaboration between government agencies and individual citizens to design government services.

I offer a case study on the Department of Human Services (DHS), an Australian federal service delivery agency currently undergoing a period of reform, a core component of which is co-design. The case study focuses on public servants, taking an interpretivist approach to foreground the influences on their thinking and how their different concepts of co-design impact not only the relationship they have with citizens, each other, and other government departments but also the way they construct and construe their identity as a public servant.

I am interested in how public servants conceptualise and receive co-design. I argue that DHS public servants conceptualise co-design as either an ‘efficiency measure’, a means by which government can engage citizens to understand their preferences better so that it can shift them or as ‘rightful engagement’, a way to give citizens a stake in design proceedings and mine their experiences for innovative ways of doing things. Public servants mobilise co-design toward different goals. As co-design is spread within the department, public servants react by seeing it as nice to have (but not essential), interesting (but not as robust as other design methods) or a challenge to how they perceive their own role and work.

While reform to the way a government department engages citizens is never expected to be simple or linear, this paper shows that it is especially complex when there is variation and tension in the way public servants think about the purpose and utility of such citizen engagement.
Panel 3: 3.30pm-5pm

Public policy and behavioural change in the private sector: Evaluating the effectiveness of environmental certification schemes

Fabio Jiménez

It is increasingly accepted that mitigating climate change demands a cooperative approach from both, public and private actors (Burch and Harris 2014: 8; Giddens 2011: 120). While traditional policy measures such as anti-pollution regulation, carbon taxation and infrastructure development (e.g. wind farms, smart grid) have evidenced variable results around the world, there is very little research on more recent policy instruments, such as environmental certification schemes. To date, there is no conclusive evidence on whether they really contribute to change private companies’ behaviour, in terms of their environmental performance.

My research project aims to shed light on this issue by evaluating the implementation of the Carbon Neutrality Program in Costa Rica. On May 2012, the government of Costa Rica officialised this program as one of the policy measures aimed at mitigating climate change and advancing towards a lower carbon emissions development model (MINAET 2009). Essentially, the Carbon Neutrality Program may be seen as a certification scheme which establishes the norms, procedures and standards necessary for any organisation to claim net zero carbon emissions and obtain the brand “C-Neutral” (MINAET 2012). Similar schemes also exist in New Zealand, Australia and United Kingdom (Rauland and Newman 2015), but Costa Rica is the first developing country in implementing this kind of policy instrument.

Does electoral quota for women undermine the democratic legitimacy of parliamentary representation? A case study on Sri Lanka.

Saliya Jayathilaka

A key debate in liberal democracy is the issue of group rights over individual choices. In representative democracy, individual choices decide the representatives, and it considers as ‘democratic’. But in a multicultural and pluralistic society, it’s an open question whether these representatives can represent a divergent society. The argument for group rights is, the best person to make decisions on behalf of a group is someone from that group. Representation for women has become a key discourse in group rights, as most of the time men dominate women in the political representation.

This is currently the case for Sri Lanka, as 52 percent of population consist of women, but only 4.9 percent of members of parliament are women. So, electoral quotas for women are proposed to increase women’s involvement in politics. However, this proposal is challenged as ‘undemocratic’ and potentially discriminatory.
In this study I argue electoral quota for women is a good thing for Sri Lanka’s democracy, and thereby it will not undermine democratic legitimacy of parliamentary representation. Sri Lanka is a well established democracy, but has low representation of women in parliament. The government proposed electoral gender quotas as the solution. Evidences suggest that electoral quota is effective in providing more equitable representation for women in politics. However, difference between individual rights and group rights, creates a debate on women’s rights, as ‘ability to vote’ vs. ‘group representation’. The social nature of politics suggests, group representation is important, not just ability to vote. Therefore, to overcome social factors women should be prioritised and represented as a group through electoral quota.

Unpacking policy success

Louisa Mamouney

Bovens and Hart (1996) state “there are no fixed criteria for policy success or failure that can be applied regardless of time or place”. As Edwards explains, it is tough for social scientists to get agreement on an interpretation of the real world than everyone can agree on because events cannot be isolated and there are too many factors – including personalities, culture, history and circumstances – to come up with one true explanation (Edwards 2002). It is complex: policies can succeed or fail in numerous ways, success is hard to define, and there are various situations and causes of policy failure, so pinpointing the exact cause of policy failure is problematic Howlett et al. (2009).

But we know that policies fail. We can describe why they fail: technical failures, managerial incompetence, corruption, practical drift, overspending on project development, unintended consequences, over-ambitious attempts to address intractable problems, mismatch between goals and means, mis-judgements at the decision-making stage, implementation failures such as the failure of policy to be implemented as intended, lack of effective oversight in implementation, not learning from past experiences Howlett et al. (2009).

However, if the causes of policy failure are avoided, will the policy be successful? Do we know why policies succeed? Policy success is rarely studied (McConnell, 2010). This paper provides empirical research into policy success. It presents the results of applying non-metric multi-dimensional scaling to 35 policies to look for indicators of policy success. It shows the factors that successful policies have in common, and identifies overall trends to provide a better platform for theorising about policy success. This may assist practitioners to improve policy processes and achieve policy outcomes.