Meeting of the Interim Services Australia Independent Advisory Board

Tuesday 15 October 2024

The term of the Interim Independent Advisory Board (the Board) and its members is expected to continue until end of December 2024. Members met on Tuesday 15 October 2024 to hear updates and provide advice on:

- opportunities to prevent gender-based violence in government service delivery
- progress on Service Australia's (the Agency's) automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) activities, including the planned implementation of partial claim automation for Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payments
- the Agency's future mobile experience vision and plans
- the Trust Exchange project including verifiable credential proof of concepts
- activities being progressed to support more connected government services, including exploration of legislative reform pathways.

The Minister the Hon Bill Shorten MP thanked Board members for their ongoing support on the design, delivery and implementation of government services.

Evidence-based approaches to prevent gender-based violence

The Board has expressed a strong interest in supporting and informing gender equality and preventing gender-based violence in government service delivery. Members heard from the Agency on how payments and processes impacted by partnerships—such as Family Tax Benefit and child support assessments—can be potentially weaponised.

The Department of Social Services provided members with insights on recent evidence-based approaches. This included discussion on the findings and recommendations from the Rapid review of prevention approaches to end gender-based violence. Economic Justice Australia also presented the outcomes and recommendations from its research into the barriers to social security for women living outside metropolitan areas.

Using automation to support staff and customers

The Board heard updates and discussed the Agency's planned implementation of partial claim automation for Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payments. The Agency spoke of its progress to deliver a capability to combine staff expertise in decision making with the time savings of automation. By automating non-discretionary decisions in some claims,

processing times will be reduced and staff will have more time to focus on specific claim tasks that need manual action.

The Board also noted progress on AI experiments and the application of the automation and AI assurance process.

Members reflected on the work to date on the Agency's automation design and assurance process that include safety, transparency, ethics, trust, and human-centred design at its core.

Express Plus app Transition Strategy and Progress

The Agency showcased its vision for improving the mobile digital experience for customers by consolidating the Services Australia Express Plus mobile app offerings into the myGov app for a more integrated user experience.

Members heard of the work underway to deliver a more seamless experience for Medicare digital services in myGov app, with the full Express Plus Medicare app experience expected to be completed by the end of the financial year. The Board noted that customers will be supported to transition to using the myGov app through extensive design, communication and education.

Further work is planned in future years to consolidate Express Plus Centrelink and Express Plus Child Support app functions into the myGov app before they are retired.

The Board provided advice on priorities, new functions for the myGov app and potential extension beyond the Agency's own programs and services.

Update on the Trust Exchange project, proof of concepts for verifiable credentials

As part of the 2024 Budget, the Australian Government invested in the development of proof of concepts to test the use of Commonwealth based verifiable credentials. Verifiable credentials build on the foundations of Digital ID from proving who you are to proving what you can do, opening up a wide range of real-world use cases.

The Department of Finance is leading this initiative, with the Agency and the Australian Taxation Office testing various aspects of verifiable credentials to support and evolve the Australian Government's Digital ID system.

Members were eager to see these models and explore how the Australian Government Digital ID System can use verifiable credentials and integration with digital wallets to drive further digital adoption across the economy. The Board also heard an update on the Australian Taxation Office's proof of concept to test the ability to issue verifiable credentials for a Digital ID created with the myGovID app.

The Board provided both the Agency and the Australian Taxation Office with expert advice on considerations for the scope of testing and looks forward to hearing the outcomes of the rigorous testing of both proof of concepts in early 2025.

Single View of Customer and Legislative Reform

The Agency provided the Board with an overview of existing legislative barriers that significantly inhibit progress towards more connected and customer-centred service delivery, as identified in the myGov user audit. This includes data sharing restrictions between agencies and across the Agency's program areas (Medicare, Centrelink and Child Support). Members heard an update on the progress to explore ways to either introduce new legislation or amend legislation to improve both the staff and customer experience and meet growing expectations of government services.

This includes identifying opportunities to streamline experiences and become more operationally efficient, as customer information is currently spread across many different systems.

The Board reflected on how legislative reform is crucial for the success of this Connected View of Customer initiative and a customer-centric environment, rather than one driven by government structures. Members discussed best practice approaches and suggested next steps to support this initiative, including providing written support.