



2012 Young Professional Scholarship Winner

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Presentation to IPAA WA AGM - 26 October 2012

In September 2012 I attended the [Institute of Public Administration International Congress](#) as the grateful recipient of an IPAA WA Scholarship.

The appeal of the Congress for me was the opportunity to hear from well renowned academics and practitioners in public administration; and the opportunity to meet public servants from across the country.

I enjoyed presentations from Terry Moran, Gary Banks, Christian Bason, Nicholas Gruen, Dr Shashi Tharoor, John Brumby, Paul Posner, Greg Hywood, Tess Lea and Armando Iannucci.

The social functions and breaks between sessions provided a great opportunity to speak about service delivery, policy and influencing challenges with interstate colleagues. From these informal discussions I took away a new perspective on my work plan and an appreciation that I am not part of the QLD public service!

Once back in the office, I shared the most relevant ideas from the Congress with colleagues in an hour long presentation. This generated a lot of discussion (and a little jealousy). Colleagues were particularly interested in the Behavioural Insights Team and the Game Changers Report. These two Congress sessions are relevant to me as I work on a major reform for public housing. To be successful, it will involve behavioural change among clients and to achieve the aim of the reform, we need to focus on the biggest potential for gain by concentrating our efforts and not wasting our Executive's appetite for change.

The [Behavioural Insights Team](#), or the 'Nudge Unit', was set up in the UK following the 2010 election of a new, coalition government. David Halpern, head of the Team, explained that the Government's willingness to trial new methods helped the Team achieve savings of around 22 times the cost of the team and, identify specific interventions which will save at least £300m over the next 5 years. The Team's goal is to use insights from behavioural economics to influence policies and build the capacity of participating agencies. Through this, the Government hopes to enable people to make better choices for themselves.

A couple of examples show how the team was able to make a positive difference to client behaviour, with very little additional government money, by making it Easy; Personal; Relevant; Social; Worthwhile; or Timely.

- An example that takes advantage of the 'Social' element is the 15 percentage point increase in tax payment rates from non-payers being told that most people in their town had already paid their tax.





- An example of the 'Personal', is that personalised text messages were found to be six times more effective than final warning letters at prompting fine payments.

As a result of the Team's success, they will continue their work for another 2 years and have been permitted to assist external organisations on a for-charge basis. One piece of work will shortly commence in partnership with the Government of New South Wales to embed insights from behavioural sciences across a range of public policy priorities

The 'Game Changers' panel presentation began with the comment that 'leaders who get the most done, are the ones that try to do the least. That is, those who concentrate their efforts on three key priorities are more likely to see significant, relevant change, than those who spread their efforts over many areas.

The presentation was given in the context of the Grattan Institute Report; '[Game Changers: Economic Reform Priorities for Australia](#)' which identifies the three big wins to improve GDP; reform the tax mix, and increase the workforce participation rates of women and older people. The report argues that together these 'game-changing' reforms could contribute more than \$70 billion to the Australian economy. To achieve the increase in GDP necessary to maintain current levels of spending, governments should concentrate their limited resources for economic reform where they can have the greatest impact on Australian prosperity.

The presenters made a point that really hit home for me – that the scarcest resource in our organisations is not money; it is political capital and executive time. As part of a team working on a major reform for the Department; I can attest to this – knowing that we need to get our proposal on the crowded agenda of executives drives us to present a brief, clear and coherent argument. Following the Game Changers presentation I have done a lot of thinking around what we need to focus on and what we need to let go of in order to achieve the most significant outcome for the Department.

To conclude; thank you for the opportunity to attend the Congress and for your time today.

I look forward to working with you to make the 2014 IPAA Congress in Perth, even bigger and better than Melbourne.

