The Allen Consulting Group

Spotlight on 2011 Practice: Stakeholder Engagement in Australian Public Sector

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Collaborative study: examines and documents practitioners' perspectives and practices on stakeholder engagement and public consultation

- Series of stakeholder studies- 1999, 2006,2011; approx. 20 (self- selected) departments/agencies

- 2011: 22 federal and state

- Methodology:
  - 2-3 group interviews per department; one as workshop
  - case studies collected and verified
  - department self assessment rating
  - forum May 2011 – hypothesis based discussion paper

- Publication and report back August 2011

Stakeholder engagement trends:
more intensive, institutional, and complex
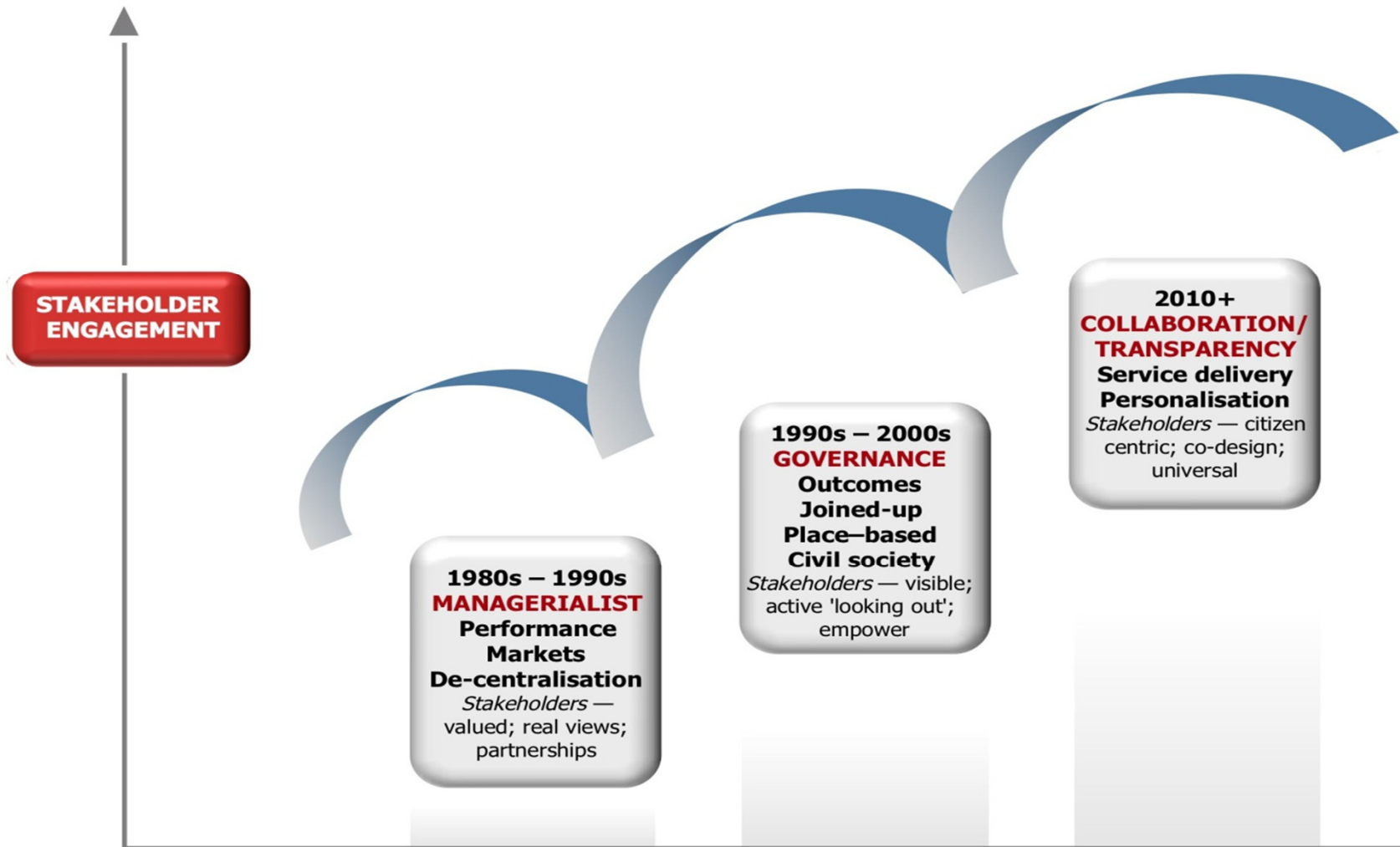
Stakeholder concepts:
located in public sector reform orientation

1999 – performance, markets and partnerships

- Modest s/h aspirations
- Soft 'communication' mixed with 'hard' new administrative models
- Democratic - more public participation' have a say'
- Get to 'real views'
- Partnerships –contracts but also relationships

2006 – outcomes, joined-up and empowerment

- Less tentative but uneven
- Big concepts: joined up, wicked problems, empowerment, networked governance
- Sought better institutional structures
- New 'conversations'
- Some world class – local

2010-11 Major shift in intensity and characteristics

Relentlessly demanding era ?

Collaboration, tailored, transparent…

Stakeholder and citizen engagement role pervasive

Democratic demands

Policy dilemmas

Service complexities

2011: What did they tell us?

→ *Stakeholder engagement and public consultation moving rapidly to core business – with all that implies*

   → But uneven within and among jurisdictions - and needs more work

→ *Definition of stakeholder is ever expanding*

   → Barriers are down- whoever is needed is brought in

   → Intra-government and non-govt; voluntary and involuntary; interest groups and experts; private and business; citizens and publics

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2011: What did they tell us? (contd)

- *Engagement ramping up in service delivery: new process and tools; optimistic; competent*
  - 'Personalisation ', devolution, autonomy – big conceptual shifts
  - 'Co-design' a serious endeavour but early days
  - Political dimension: relatively low profile

(Human services, education, community development, state environment)

- *Engagement in policy more fraught: universally expected; innovations - not only It/media;*
  - political v. bureaucratic roles and expectations shifting: more complex e.g. Tanner and 'media cyclone' in new politics and policy; mining tax; Murray Darling Basin…
  - Transparency promised but often compromised
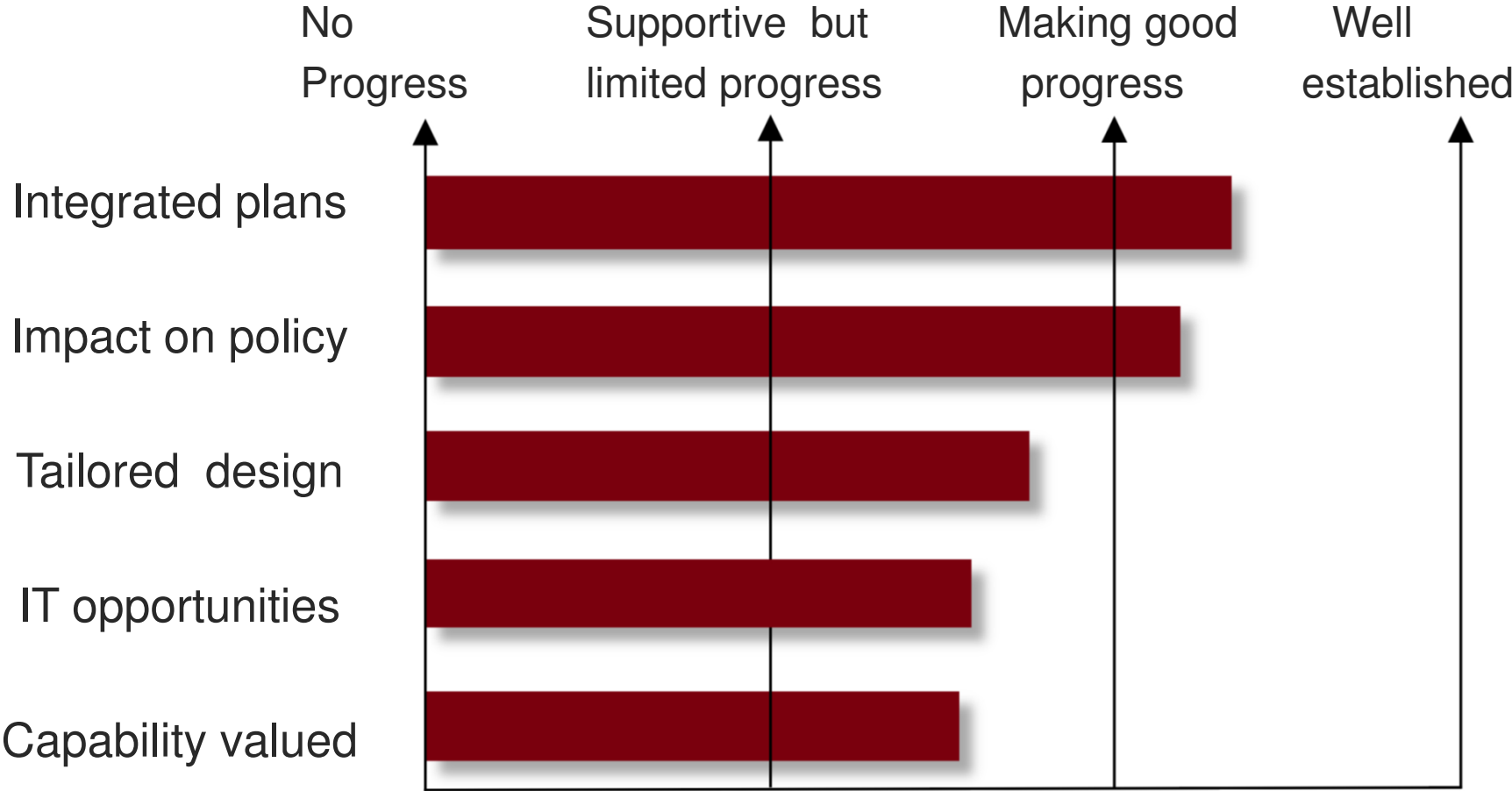   (State and federal differences- access; scope)

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2011: What did they tell us? (contd)

- *On-line engagement anticipated but risks not sorted*
  - Some v. cautious; versus radical (e.g. SA Strategic Plan)
  - Emergency services and 'fence line' communications advancing quickly and many exemplary (e.g. Vic locust plague warnings)
  - Understanding networks and transient audiences a major challenge – get to *'so what now?'*
- *Fatigue and frustration in Indigenous communities*
  - Already tried so much; cannot keep asking.
- *What happened to joined –up and place-based government?*
  - Are there successful trials that open up engagement?

Self assessment: making progress

	No Progress	Supportive but limited progress	Making good progress	Well established
Integrated plans				
Impact on policy				
Tailored design				
IT opportunities				
Capability valued				

Self assessment: making progress (contd)

Main Benefits

- Significantly adds to quality of policy or service

- Builds community understanding and buy-in

- Improves departments'/minister's reputation

- Reduces vocal opposition; keeps the key stakeholder groups in-the-tent; and

- Boosts the profile of an initiative in government   e.g. treasury

Challenges: the tough issues

As stakeholders become core business- the challenges become far more differentiated

- *Governance Challenges - juggling new and established modes*

- *Policy and Service Design Challenges - policy versus implementation; and domains differ*

- *Operational Challenges- move from specialists to full organisational capacity*

Challenges are conceptual and operational but manageable over time with *focus* and *resources*

- *Governance Challenges - juggling new and established modes*
  - Beyond 'representatives' to engaging community
  - Compatible with established processes - 'Post- Westminster' ?
  - Managing new architecture of engagement
- *Policy and Service Design Challenges - policy arenas differ*
  - Sustaining engagement over long run reform- as in human services
  - Engagement so community owns decisions; accepts trade-offs- as in planning, infrastructure and environment
  - Managing collaboration v. partnerships – new rules for new commercial and social relationships?
- *Operational Challenges- from specialists to organisational capacity*
  - Whole of department consistency- crying out for frameworks and plans
  - Building capabilities - minimal attention so far
  - Understanding Cost-Benefits – no evaluation models; essential for new resources

2011 participating departments and agencies

ACT	Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services
AUST	Australian Bureau of Statistics
	Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency
	Department of Human Services
	Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
	Department of Veterans' Affairs
NSW	Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA)
	Sydney Water Corporation
	Department of Human Services
NT	Department of the Chief Minister
SA	Attorney-General's Department
	Department of the Premier and Cabinet
TAS	Department of Premier and Cabinet
VIC	Consumer Affairs Victoria
	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
	Department of Planning and Community Development
	Department of Premier and Cabinet
	Department of Primary Industries
	Department of Treasury and Finance
	Victoria Police
WA	Department of Environment and Conservation
	Department of Housing