

12 April 2019

Dr Matthew Bultin
South Australian Productivity Commission
GPO Box 2343
Adelaide SA 5001

Dear Dr Bultin

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the draft report for the Government Procurement Inquiry Stage 1. Wicked Lab would like to provide comment on information request 6.3.

Information request 6.3: Having heard the NFP sector's views on the benefits of a system-wide approach, to what extent do current public authority procurement practices: (a) consider collateral impacts on non-government providers across the system; and/or (b) have a systemic client-centric or sector-wide approach?

For South Australia to have effective procurement practices for addressing complex social policy problems, these practices need to support the formation of the coherent ecosystems of initiatives that are required for addressing complex social policy problems. While currently public authority procurement practices do not consider collateral impacts and take a systemic approach, this weakness will be addressed by informed governments that take an evidenced base policy approach as the need for systemic approaches is now acknowledged nationally and internationally. Examples of the increasing focus being placed on taking a systemic approach include the Australian Productivity Commission inquiry into Systems for Protecting Children (2019), the World Health Organization's recognised need for a complexity perspective when developing public health guidelines (2019) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's identified need for systems approaches to transform the public sector so that governments are ready to tackle 21st-century challenges (2018).

The Australian Government Productivity Commission recently requested information for an inquiry into Systems for Protecting Children. For this inquiry, the Secretariat for the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service sought views, evidence and other relevant information on:

- the main barriers and enablers to implementing the public health approach in a system to protect children in Australia (with a focus on working across the entire system)
- examples of approaches to address system design and implementation challenges and their applicability to, or success in, the Australian context (including across different cultural groups and locations)
- public health approaches used in other social service areas and the lessons they provide for designing a system to protect children.
- Both quantitative and qualitative evidence is welcome.

A recent Bulletin of the World Health Organization (2019) recognised that developers of evidence-informed guidance often apply processes and methods grounded in linear models of cause and effect that do not adequately consider relevant aspects of complexity in interventions, ‘including the multiple-component nature of some interventions, the nonlinear causal pathways to effects, and the relationship with the local context and how interventions interact within that context. The complex systems where these interventions are delivered and the diverse and often difficult-to-measure outcomes at the individual, population and/or system levels, are often not sufficiently examined either’. In response to this identified weakness of current approaches the World Health Organization is ‘advancing the application of a complexity perspective to systematic reviews and to all stages of guideline development in the fields of public health and health systems’.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report Embracing Innovation in Government Global Trends 2018 (p. 61) states:

‘The time for piecemeal solutions in the public sector is over. Governments interested in successful innovative solutions need to take into account the complex nature of problems in the real world. Systems approaches can help governments tackle crosscutting issues and analyse problems by focusing on the objectives the public sector wants to achieve, redrawing organisational boundaries based on those objectives, and bringing together different stakeholders able to transcend public sector capacities.’

Wicked Lab’s Tool for Systemic Change was highlighted in this Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report as an Innovation Highlight (p. 60) and its Systemic Innovation Lab methodology was recently described in the 2019 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report Transformation of Public Value: Cities as the playground for the future.

If you require any further information regarding our contribution to the inquiry please do not hesitate to contact me on sharon@wickedlab.com.au or 0404 749 214.

Yours Sincerely,



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References:

Australian Government Productivity Commission (2019), Systems for Protecting Children, viewed April 18 2019, <<https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/what-works/child-protection/consultation>>

OECD (2019), Transformation of Public Value: Cities as the playground for the future, <<https://oecd-opsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/WP2.3-report-fin.pdf>>

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World Health Organization (2019), Bulletin of the World Health Organization: Taking a complexity perspective when developing public health guidelines, <<https://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/97/4/19-230987/en/>>