

22 August 2008

The Executive Officer
Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament of Victoria
Spring Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Re: Submission from the Office of Knowledge Capital to the *Inquiry into Improving Access to Victorian Government Public Sector Information and Data.*

Introduction

The objective of this response by the Office of Knowledge Capital (OKC) is to set out in broad terms the OKC's interest with regard to improving access to Victorian Government Public Sector Information and Data. The focus of our submission is on the OKC's emerging role as a facilitator of collaboration and knowledge exchange between universities, governments, business and the wider community; and the importance of open accessibility to relevant information in the public domain.

It is noted that the City of Melbourne, a founding member of the OKC, will prepare and submit an independent response to this Review, which will address more fully the questions posed specially from its local government perspective. This submission is independent of other submissions and reflects the specific mission and objectives of the OKC related to knowledge capital.

The Office of Knowledge Capital:

The Office of Knowledge Capital (OKC) has recently been established to drive the evolution and promotion of Melbourne as a global knowledge city, building on its strength as a national and international leader in higher education, research and innovation.

Its mission is to "*Collaborate to develop and promote Melbourne as Australia's Knowledge Capital*". The OKC with its knowledge of the economic, social and cultural profiles of Melbourne is uniquely positioned to be able to provide a vital link in promoting effective partnership between universities, industry and the community. To ensure a clear focus on outcomes that will deliver against the mission, the OKC will pursue three strategic objectives.

1. Develop and promote Melbourne locally, nationally and globally to achieve recognition as "Australia's Knowledge Capital" and a "Global University City";
2. Facilitate collaboration between the Office of Knowledge Capital and governments, businesses and other communities;
3. Form links with similar 'knowledge cities' to enable mutually beneficial interactions.

The Melbourne Vice Chancellors' Forum, created by the Lord Mayor in 2005, has established the OKC as a jointly funded collaboration between Victoria's eight universities with campuses in the greater Melbourne area; i.e. Australian Catholic University, Deakin University, La Trobe University, Monash University, RMIT University, Swinburne University of Technology, University of Melbourne and Victoria University; the Committee for Melbourne and the City of Melbourne. Beyond this founding group, the opportunity exists for the collaboration to be expanded to include new partners, such as research institutes, business interests, government agencies and other local councils that host university campuses.

Areas of interest:

The importance of the knowledge based economy is well established, and underpinned by the need for accessibility to accurate and reliable information and data. This requires effective information and data sharing capabilities across Victoria's universities, R&D facilities, industry and government to enable economic and social progress, cultural enrichment and general community development.

Within this context the areas of interest to the OKC are:

- The importance of investment in knowledge, including information and data assets, in protecting Victoria's economic future;
- The role of collaboration between higher education institutions, governments and business as a critical link to building global competitiveness and prosperity;
- The need to foster better interaction between universities and the local communities that host them as vital links to the states future economic, social and cultural prosperity;
- Recognition that creating effective collaborations between higher education, business and governments requires both public and private sector investment.

Inquiry into Improving Access to Victorian Public Sector Information Discussion Paper and OKC Response:

In the context of the above comments, our response will be confined to Questions 1 to 4 in the Discussion Paper of July 2008. An overarching comment is that PSI information for public access and use needs to satisfy the broad test of not being confidential or sensitive related to government business, privacy and/or probity issues.

Q1. Advantages and disadvantages of 'push' and 'pull' models.

Both approaches are required to cater for varying needs, styles and preferences in the broader community for mechanisms to access information of interest, relevance, and/or value. Overall the development of 'user friendly' formats and access mechanisms, e.g. easily navigable websites, will encourage greater community use and the opportunity to refine approaches based on user feedback. Notwithstanding this, the 'push' model does overcome the 'ignorance' issue by proactively making users aware of the menu of information available. A knowledge based economy should encourage its citizens and

communities to enquire, learn and apply relevant information for improvement and beneficial outcomes.

Q2. How can improved access to and re-use of PSI drive economic growth, employment opportunities and new commercial ventures?

Recognizing that information, data and the associated knowledge underpins more informed understanding of opportunities, identification of options and decision making; improved access enables these processes to be optimized within the community. In particular, application of relevant PSI in the analysis and planning stages of processes may improve the likelihood of success of new economic and commercial developments.

Q3. What can the Victorian Government do to improve access to PSI in a manner that creates new opportunities for information and knowledge flow, and thereby encourage further innovation?

While improving access in itself can be considered a public good, linkages to existing Government initiatives in the knowledge economy field, such as the Innovation Strategy, can provide a context for public use and beneficial applications. It is not unreasonable for example that Government encourages its citizens and communities to apply increased access in such a manner in return for increased and more open access. Again this could be considered the sign of a knowledge economy in the contemporary setting.

This approach also aligns with the operating model being developed by the OKC involving a knowledge exchange approach, and we would be interested to discuss this further with Government as appropriate.

Q4. What kind of information would provide the greatest opportunities to develop (a) investment and business opportunities, (b) social, medical and scientific research, and (c) community and civic engagement?

Information across the entire spectrum is considered appropriate, and it is expected that individual sectoral and/or industry groups will most likely address the particular categories in more detail. The OKC's mission is to apply knowledge exchange across all fields and to achieve convergence and/or synergies between the university, government and industry sectors as well as more broadly with the community.

Overall in a knowledge based approach, there is recognition of the need to develop a consistent framework to store and access information and data, and to then apply it in a knowledgeable context. The benefits of appropriate repositories, both centralized and decentralized using relevant ICT, to enable a seamless transfer of and sharing of information seem apparent, however, the complexities of creating and working within such a framework are recognized and require innovative approaches.

The Office of Knowledge Capital provides an opportunity for an integrated approach to achieving effective educational, economic, industry and community outcomes.



We look forward to the opportunity for further engagement with the Inquiry and would welcome the opportunity to meet to discuss specific aspects raised in this submission. We look forward to the eventual outcomes of the Inquiry and future improvements into the development of Victorian Public Sector Information and Data.

David Campbell
Executive Director
Office of Knowledge Capital

P +61 3 9658 8728
M +61 408 106 949
david.campbell@melbourne.vic.gov.au

City of Melbourne
PO Box 1603
Melbourne 3001
Victoria Australia