State of Victoria, Australia

# CAPABILITY CASE STUDY

## Structuring for agility
## Australia

Attempts at making communication teams more agile and responsive are often short lived, largely because the integration of new ideas into old bureaucratic models can be a long and tedious process. The alternative, as adopted by the State of Victoria, is to circumvent existing structures altogether.

"It had become abundantly clear that conventional media was simply inadequate to communicate on large infrastructure works, which disrupt citizens' daily lives. We needed to establish a two-way communication channel to mitigate discontent," says Jeremi Moule, the Executive Director of Strategic Communication, Engagement and Protocol at the Victoria State Government in Australia.

Government departments were traditionally structured and skilled for public relations work and media buying. To engage with citizens, new authorities were created with an ad-hoc skillset targeted at creating dialogue. "We wanted to leverage new tools, from real time online chats to more conventional written transmissions that we can use to open a dialogue with citizens."

The Level Crossing Removal Authority was created to support the replacement of over 50 congested level crossings across Melbourne. Through a dedicated website and automated newsletter, the authority provides updates on progress and notifies citizens of impending disruptions. A feedback mechanism enables citizens to interact with the customer service team, both via the website platform as well as via social media like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

The main advantage of creating specific authorities is focus. Without distractions from wider departmental woes, and with a fit-for-purpose skills pool, the communication team is constantly engaged with the public from the start to the end of the project. In addition, having a dedicated budget for an activity, rather than relying on financial support from the wider department, allows for a more effective management of resources.

To ensure that messages, objectives and budgets remain aligned with the mission of local government, the work of the authorities, just like that of any departmental communication team, is overseen by an Advertising Approval Group. The group, composed of senior leadership from across government communication, is responsible for seeking budgetary approval from Cabinet, as well as providing an advisory role on the content and quality of the campaigns themselves.

The number of authorities in Victoria is expanding, with two already active and one more in current development. "Setting up authorities with the skills and resources for engagement ensures that communication can support a challenging policy implementation process from the outset." While creating ad-hoc services may not be possible for all government initiatives, using satellite teams with niche skills seams an intelligent option for the larger policy delivery challenges.

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