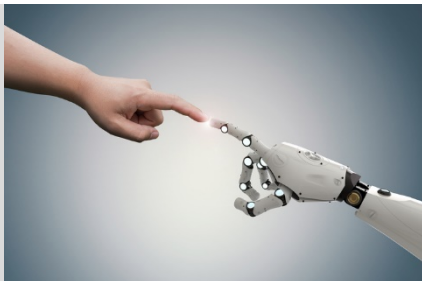


22 September, 2023

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Greetings disruptors, edgehunters and explorers of liminal policy spaces!

Welcome to the APS Futures Capability Project Newsletter – POSTNORMAL.

In each issue we'll give you a little snapshot of where we're at with the project and what we're up to; explore some of the ideas with which we're engaging in the "Temporal Salon", including interviews with APS futures experts; highlight a "Technique of the Week" as we continue to play with futures tools and methods for policy; and flag "3 Cool Things" we've come across in our reading.

This week in The Temporal Salon we're looking at a renegade group of NASA scientists who created "The Pirate Paradigm", and sharing a quick and dirty futures tool for project teams grappling with stakeholder engagement and/or policy design called "The 3PP" in our Technique of the Week.

Futures: the discipline of exploring, anticipating and shaping the future. Also known as *strategic foresight*.

Futures is not about prediction (forecasting). It is about leveraging collective intelligence with structured approaches (such as horizon scanning and scenario planning) to make pro-active decisions in a global environment characterised by uncertainty, complexity and change. It is fundamental for good policy and thinking beyond the short term.

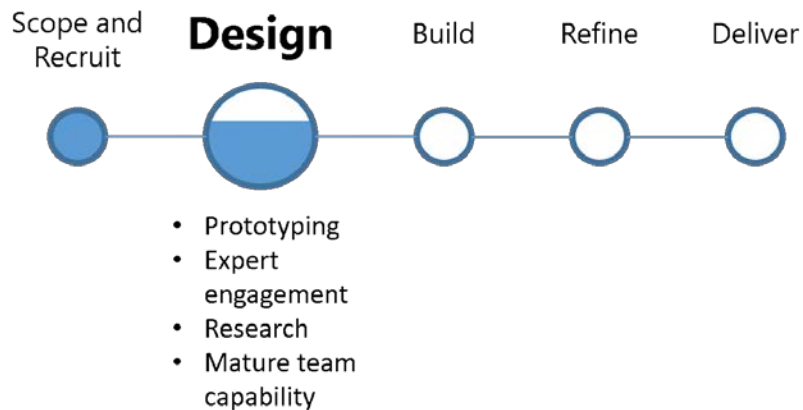
Futures gives us the tools to **identify the future we want and take action now** to pursue it.

If you're new to futures or our project, see the attached one-pager for a high level view on what we're doing. Our project runs until January 2024 so we have a lot to do in the coming months.

As always, get in touch with us at futures@pmc.gov.au if you have questions or comments about the project, or how to get started using futures in your agency. Feel free to send this on to friends and colleagues – we're happy to add them to our subscription list on request.

Project update

We are coming to the end of our **design phase**. We've been focusing on prototyping the key artefacts we intend to produce, and the SES workshops we'll be running in November.



We've begun running our **structured interviews with experts** around the APS (individuals and teams) to draw together the best ideas and insights for using futures in practice in policy. One of the key goals for this project is to gather the lessons learned, innovative approaches and models for successful futures work that already exists within the APS to give us all ideas on how we can do better.

Head starts are important – templates, workshop tips, examples of futures in practice in an APS policy environment. Relevant and useful materials can reduce friction for a policy team wanting to give futures a go. Stay tuned – we will include some highlights from these in future newsletters.

We have some fantastic ideas for our main workshop deliverable (**a whole-of-government scenario exercise targeting SES1/2 officers**) – we will relay here the options that *didn't* make the cut, as they are still pretty cool! Work is also progressing on our first 'minikit' – a prototype for our **final 'futures primer' deliverable** that models our approach to information design and helps scope out the final product.

We've also been developing some light touch, quick and dirty **futures workshops we can run for policy teams** interested in dipping their toes in the ocean of futures (*spoiler alert: it's hotter, higher and has less great barrier reef*). This helps us build both our capability and yours. If you, your boss or your team might be interested in exploring the future of their policy space or doing some longer term strategy work, [get in touch](#) with us!

The Temporal Salon

This week's topic: policy innovation, renegades and risk-taking



The [Pirate Paradigm](#); "Governments aren't good at innovation" is something a lot of people believe inside and outside the APS. Big, complex social systems like a Commonwealth department have a lot of inertia. How can you overcome this and make real change and innovation happen?

This is a key concern for our project – we want the APS to do things differently. We want agencies to invest in futures, even though it inherently (when done well) challenges assumptions, the status quo, and looks beyond the mainstream. Futures is about feeling out the edges of what we know and using it to make better decisions about how we proceed.

On the flip side, more than once I've heard David Fredericks (currently Secretary of the Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment of Water) remind staff that public servants took us to the moon. NASA is a great example – one of many! – of the vital catalysing role of governments for innovation, transformation and progress. NASA pushed the edge out. They helped create a "new normal" where space travel was a reality.

In the mid 1980's a group of young engineers at NASA were frustrated by the mission control system, which was still running on an Apollo-era (early 70's) mainframe. Plans for the International Space Station were well advanced and in the wake of the Challenger accident, the need for change was critical – the engineers clearly saw that mission demands were growing in scope and complexity, far beyond the capabilities of their systems. However, progressive budget cuts (sound

familiar?) and a strong attachment to the tried and tested system that had taken humans to the moon meant the concerns fell on deaf ears.

The engineers were undeterred. They went rogue and built a new system - in their off hours and on a shoe string budget. They faced fierce opposition from the established order. However, after a year of tinkering and slowly winning quiet support from key leaders at NASA (bypassing middle management), the shuttle and ISS programmes were shifted over to the renegade's new system. They won.

Their approach was dubbed the "[Pirate Paradigm](#)":

1. Don't wait to be told to do something; figure it out for yourself.
2. Challenge everything, and steel yourself for the inevitable cynicism, opposition, rumours, false reporting, innuendos, and slander.
3. Break the rules, not the law.
4. Take risks as a rule, not as the exception.
5. Cut out unnecessary timelines, schedules, processes, reviews, and bureaucracy.
6. Just get started; fix problems as you go along.
7. Build a product, not an organization; outsource as much as possible.

The NASA renegades demonstrated how risk-taking can counter bureaucracy and push aside institutional inertia. For those of you familiar with [agile project management](#) you might recognise the similarities – their Pirates' motto of "build a little, test a little, fix a little" reflects the essence of agility before it became fashionable (and influenced PPTO's approach to policy project management, which you can find some information on here).

There are a [bunch of great insights](#) from the researchers who looked into this team. The key one to highlight is the importance of fostering 'positive deviants' like the NASA pirates – people who understand looming challenges, and have the creativity and vision to create better ways to deal with those challenges. Nurturing constructive dissent is difficult - but is the key to getting better, step by step.

Positive deviants may be exactly the right people to put on a futures team. There might be some lessons here for those of you just getting started with futures – especially if you are yet to convince your middle management. Are you a positive deviant? Or would you like to be? [Let us know](#) - I'd love a great example to put in the next newsletter. 😊

Technique of the week – the 3PP's

This workshop tool is useful when kicking off a new policy project or taskforce in a sensitive, controversial or contested policy space – especially where there is likely to be resistance from key stakeholders who will need to be managed. It takes a human-centred approach to the [three horizons model](#), which you may be familiar with.

We call it “the 3PP’s” (Three Policy Perspectives). It’s a modified version of a tool from [Sitra](#), a Finnish public innovation think tank and investment foundation. Sitra is a world leader in foresight innovation and has a lot of interesting toys to play with.

The 3PP (Three Policy Perspectives)

Time: 45 minutes.

Participants: Three people, or groups of three people

Objectives: Consider possible stakeholder sensitivities and develop ideas for positively influencing stakeholders and building consensus. The tool can also be helpful for considering level of ambition for a project based on possible levels of support from decision-makers and key stakeholders.

Ideal for: Small teams with high level policy direction needing to undertake stakeholder engagement, strategic communications or policy option development.

Preparation: The group has a clear, mutual understanding of the principal policy objective and a high level vision, plan and/or direction (the more specific, the better).

This tool examines the policy from three perspectives, which participants will represent through three characters:

1. **The Traditionalist.** This character is highly conservative about change and is committed to the status quo. They focus on the potential risks of new initiatives, and if pressed on the need for action, prefer minor adjustments to existing policy settings over substantial reforms. The Traditionalist represents the current state of the policy space.
2. **The Incrementalist.** This character is interested in immediate action that produces positive outcomes in the immediate or near future. They are practical and opportunistic. They understand the longer term vision but are primarily interested in what can be done to move forward in the short term, preferring smaller incremental benefits sooner to more aspirational goals. The Bridge-Builder represents the policy space in transition – the bridge builders.
3. **The Visionary.** This character wants radical change in the policy space. They are interested in the big picture, genuine reform, and enduring change. They don’t want to get bogged down in details and want to focus on the pathway to fully addressing the key issues at the heart of the policy space, rather than expending effort on half-measures. The Visionary represents the long term vision for the policy space.

See attached for an example run sheet (including some tips and examples) if you’re interested in running this with your team!

You can find the Sitra version this is based on [here](#). This can be a fun one to give a try! If you have a group of three people in your team, you can knock this one over in under half an hour. This exercise can also complement a “Three Horizons”

exercise, such as the example found here. Warning: if you do it by yourself, there is a risk of developing multiple personality disorder.

3 Cool Things

1. Co-creating Fearless Futures: A Feminist Cartographer's Toolkit (by the Association for Women's Rights in Development). You've GOT to [check this one out](#), it's amazing. Aimed at surfacing unique feminist futures with a strong focus on storytelling, it has an incredible artistic take on many classic foresight methods, including facilitation guidance, cue cards and worksheets. It may not be the easiest way to get started with futures but it certainly fired our imaginations. ([Direct link here](#) if that doesn't work).
2. What will the next tech rebellion look like? Ask the Luddites. [This extract](#) from Blood in the Machine: the Origins of the Rebellion Against Big Tech by Brian Merchant compares current concerns about technology firms and the time of the Luddites. He proposes that "little has fundamentally changed about our attitudes towards entrepreneurs and innovation, how our economies are organised, or the means through which technologies are introduced into our lives and societies. A constant tension exists between employers with access to productive technologies, and the workers at their whims".

His conclusion about how uprisings start? He suggests three drivers:

- "When entrepreneurs and executives deploy new technologies intended to replace skilled work, confound or elude regulations, or degrade traditional jobs en masse—especially in difficult economic circumstances. It's worse if those workers have no recourse."
- When managers use technology to embark on the widespread destruction of status and the pathways to upward mobility.
- When technological development is top-down and antidemocratic—and workers get no say in how automation or algorithms impact their daily lives.

The author concludes:

Those Luddites rose up when their disparate grievances reached a fever pitch, uniting them in a struggle against the agents of their technologised exploitation. It may be only a matter of time before the rebel workers of the new machine age see the injustices of the on-demand platforms as too much to bear, the surveillance apparatus of Big Tech too intrusive, the robotic pace of work too ruthlessly body-breaking.

And if they feel the rage of Frankenstein's monster, rebooted in a new era of boundless entrepreneurial adventuring, and they catch sight of those autonomous

vehicles assembling like ghosts on the horizon, they might just reach, once again, for their hammers.

Worth a read! We're big proponents of the idea that governments have enormous capacity to shape outcomes in respect to how new technologies affect jobs and lives – but the key is to work with the grain of change to identify how we can use new technologies and platforms to support truly inclusive economic growth, fulfilling jobs and social progress, as well as manage the risks.

3. US per-capita carbon emissions have fallen to pre-WW1 levels. We'll take whatever good news we can get on climate – it did dip this low one other time during the Great Recession, but it's still a big achievement. Unfortunately global emissions are still going up, and Australia is only in [the mid 1980's](#) (not counting our traded goods either). It also excludes impacts from climate disasters - this year Canadian wildfires burned a land area larger than 104 of the world's 195 countries, releasing nearly 1.5 billion tons of CO2 – more than the combined emissions of over 100 other countries.

What's worse, this is part of an ongoing trend – every year since 2001, Canada's forests have emitted more carbon than they have absorbed. So far this decade, Canada's forests have raised the country's total emissions by 50%. Forests risk becoming a carbon source rather than a carbon sink – and less likely to be a carbon solution as the world warms (Fingers crossed for Australia this summer).

Luckily, progress on renewables continues to accelerate – the world's total renewable capacity rose to [4,500 gigawatts this year](#), equal to the total power output of the US and China combined. Manufacturing capacity for solar is expected to more than double over the next twelve months to 1,000 GW/annually. This is probably the most hopeful trend in the climate space – and a good one to end this issue on!

Thanks for reading! Send us your feedback and feel free to forward this on to your friends and colleagues. If you're working in the futures/strategic foresight space in government, we'd love to hear from you. Once again, our address is: futures@pmc.gov.au

This issue was drafted by Will Hartigan with support from the PPTO APS Futures Capability Project team: Arthur Horobin, Katherine Knowles, Anton Falez, Faseeha Hashmi, Melissa Permezel, and Alexander Tobal.

The 3PP (Three Policy Perspectives)



Time: 45 minutes.

Participants: Ideal for groups of three people (one or more).

Objectives: Explore possible stakeholder sensitivities, and develop ideas for positively influencing stakeholders and building consensus.

Ideal for: Small teams with a high level policy direction, vision, or plan (the more specific, the better) needing to undertake stakeholder engagement, strategic communications or policy option development.

This tool examines the policy from three perspectives, which participants will represent through three characters:

- **The Traditionalist.** This character is highly conservative about change and is committed to the status quo. They focus on the potential risks of new initiatives, and if pressed on the need for action, prefer minor adjustments to existing policy settings over substantial reforms. The Traditionalist represents the current state of the policy space.
- **The Incrementalist.** This character is interested in immediate action that produces positive outcomes in the immediate or near future. They are practical and opportunistic. They understand the longer term vision but are primarily interested in what can be done to move forward in the short term, preferring smaller incremental benefits sooner to more aspirational goals. The Bridge-Builder represents the policy space in transition – the bridge builders.
- **The Visionary.** This character wants radical change in the policy space. They are interested in the big picture, genuine reform, and enduring change. They don't want to get bogged down in details and want to focus on the pathway to fully addressing the key issues at the heart of the policy space, rather than expending effort on half-measures. The Visionary represents the long term vision for the policy space.

It's a good idea to print out descriptions of these onto cards or paper (or digital equivalents for online sessions) for participants.

Example run sheet

Step	Goal	Notes
<p>1. Set the focal vision and brief the group (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Explain the goals of the session. Ensure everyone has a mutual clear understanding of the policy vision, plan, or direction (the focal vision) that the session will consider. Divide participants into groups of three and allocate each participant a character.</p>	<p>Post-its and butchers paper (or digital equivalent, such as a Miro or Mural whiteboard) can be handy, but not necessary.</p> <p>If groups of three are not practical, participants can have share roles and work together. Avoid groups of two.</p>
<p>2. Individual thinking time. (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Give participants some time to consider what their character thinks about the focal vision.</p>	<p>Each participant should aim to identify at least three positive insights and three negative insights from their characters perspective. (Things they would like or not like about the vision, plan or proposal).</p> <p>An optional step could be for them to identify possible stakeholder groups (better if they are organisations rather than individuals) who may align with their characters viewpoint. It can also be useful (and fun) for participants to name and come up with some imaginative details about their character.</p>
<p>3. First discussion – criticisms, risks and challenges. (10 minutes)</p>	<p>Each group of three discusses their negative insights. Participants should be encouraged to argue their character’s viewpoint – contest others perspectives and identify areas where they disagree (e.g. rebut each other’s criticisms)</p>	<p>Depending on the group’s familiarity with each other and general comfort levels with the topic and work environment, it can be useful (and fun) to support them to get in character and have a proper argument! This can help draw out potential criticisms not yet considered by the team.</p> <p>Example: The Visionary claims the proposal for a Canberra-Sydney high speed rail link is not ambitious enough – it should extend to Melbourne. The Traditionalist disagrees; it will bankrupt Qantas and only end up being used for freight and the wealthy to take holidays. The Incrementalist thinks the idea is fine – but if it takes 20 years, can we start linking Wollongong-Newcastle instead, or upgrade the existing Canberra-Sydney line to be ‘moderately-quicker speed rail’?</p>

<p>4. Second discussion – opportunities for influence, co-benefits and co-operation. (10 minutes).</p>	<p>Each group now discusses their positive insights. This time, participants should be encouraged to discuss opportunities for compromise, co-operation and co-benefits. Which elements can they mutually agree on? What trade-offs are possible to gain support for the focal vision? What elements can they make work?</p>	<p>Example: The Visionary appreciates that high speed rail is an ambitious project that many governments have failed to land, and could lead to a range of positive economic spillovers and urban development opportunities that could reduce inequality. These could provide some short term wins for the Incrementalist. The Incrementalist agrees and suggests ways that the risks of concern to the Traditionalist could be managed.</p>
<p>5. Summarise and synthesise (10 minutes).</p>	<p>If there are multiple groups, report back. Discuss the key areas of conflict and co-operation identified throughout the session. Agree the most divisive points of the focal vision and any discussed trade-offs or opportunities for influence, co-benefit or co-operation. Were there any red-lines which a character would not cross? Were there any mutual negative or positive insights across the characters?</p>	<p>It can be useful to get people to pick 3 key concerns which will need to be managed, and 3 opportunities for co-operation.</p> <p>It can situationally be useful to include a discussion of which characters key stakeholders and decision makers most closely align with.</p> <p>Variant: Rather than summarising areas of conflict and co-operation, groups can discuss policy options that would satisfy those stakeholders/decision makers – for example, discuss if the Minister was closely aligned with the traditionalist, incrementalist or visionary view on this issue – and what potential policy options would that exclude from consideration.</p>