

## **IGPS lecture: 'Learning Lessons from the Open Government Partnership Asia-Pacific Summit'**

**30 May 2014**

New Zealand should be taking a leadership role in international efforts to promote open and transparent government, Dr Michael Macaulay said in a talk to the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies.

Macaulay, the institute's incoming director, attended a recent Asia-Pacific Summit for the Open Government Partnership, which was launched in 2011 with eight countries and now has 64 signed up.

Every participating country has to produce an action plan for increasing transparency, accountability and integrity in government, with measurable commitments. The plans are then evaluated through an independent review process. Some 45% of all partnership commitments have so far been achieved.

The partnership had a number of "grand challenges" and core values, Macaulay added. The grand challenges were: improving public services; improving public integrity; and more effective management of public resources; creating safer communities; and increasing corporate accountability.

The core values were transparency, citizen participation, technology and innovation, and accountability.

New Zealand, which joined the partnership in December 2013, is drafting its initial action plan, to be submitted later this year.

Macaulay said New Zealand "can and should take a leadership role" in the partnership, given its long-standing reputation for being an open and transparent country.

The recent summit had shown that New Zealand was "clearly very highly respected". But that created "an attendant danger" that it could fail to live up to that reputation and that its efforts could look "half-hearted".

In addition, the pace of technology was such that policies around e-government were "getting a bit out of date", as other countries were increasingly talking about m-government, short for "mobile government" accessed through smart phones and the like.

The summit had also shown that collaboration was "king" and governments needed to listen more. This was especially important as fewer than half of participating countries had adequately consulted on their initial action plans.

Civil society organisations were crucial to the partnership project, especially in the long term, Macaulay said. "This is not a one-off. This is a long-term, iterative process."

However, some key questions remained unanswered, such as how an action plan would translate into specific commitments, and what would be the "participatory infrastructure" to allow input from those groups.

In developing the initial action plan, the State Services Commission had held meetings in Wellington and used the online discussion software Loomio. That feedback had been collected and presented to ministers.

Commission members in the audience for Macaulay's talk conceded that there had "not been enough" consultation, but promised they would be "full and proper" processes put in place as the partnership work developed.

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