



Centre for International Research on Communication
and Information Technologies

For Multimedia Victoria

***Maximising the Uptake of
Victorian Government Online Services***

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Maximising the Uptake of Victorian Government Online Services

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 The Victorian policy background

The objectives established by *Victoria 21* led to the rollout of infrastructure, industry, social and personal development programs, and the provision of government services online, such that Victoria could be “*recognised as a centre of excellence in the global information economy by 2001*”. The pace of change needed to meet these objectives, through programs such as *Skills.Net*, *Vicnet*, *VicOne*, *maxi* and the like, necessitated a clear “supply side” focus in program delivery.

It was seen as important to put the hardware and software, the systems and processes in place that would allow efficient and secure online government service delivery. Many of the systems that were put in place found predictable, easy acceptance among people in the community who are “early adopters” of new technologies.

Promising an ongoing commitment to its

“internationally recognised Government Online program so Victorian citizens can access Government, seven days a week, 365 days a year, 24 hours a day regardless of where they are located, by phone, Internet or public kiosk – and in the future through television”,

Connecting Victoria supplements these approaches with a commitment to

“making ICT ubiquitous ... creating the skills that will enhance people lives ... putting technology in the hands of the whole community ...”

To grow **usage** of government online services beyond the initial levels that have been seen with the rapid expansion of their **availability** now requires attention to “demand side” understandings of what is perceived as valuable by potential users so as to promote the uptake of online services.

1.2 Why people use services online

CIRCIT research into government electronic service delivery nationally and internationally indicates that six major components of effective use from a user’s perspective are “drivers” influencing the likelihood that people will use services online:

1. **The service provided is a “transaction” relevant to their daily activities**, e.g. paying a bill, lodging a claim, exchanging information, seeking a licence or permit or booking an appointment;
2. **Access points are located where people want to undertake transactions**. For many people in their interactions with government, this will be at a computer at home or at work. For those who cannot use this form of access, collocation of online access at other points of service provision becomes critical;
3. **The “interfaces” used in online service delivery are overwhelmingly user friendly**.

4. Especially in relation to financial transactions, **people use online services that they trust**. Government enjoys a fair degree of comparative trust in this regard already, but must maintain attention to privacy and security issues to ensure the trust remains;
5. People choose different “channels” to communicate in different contexts and to suit their capacities and needs. **Allowing choice of channels promotes effective use of new technologies for government, communities and individuals**;
6. Quicker service, 24 hour availability, cheaper processing or convenience of home or work access are examples of how **intrinsic or additional incentives can be highlighted to promote the use of online services**.

1.3 How the Government provides services

Government faces important challenges as it re-engineers its service delivery systems to provide for access through new and emerging communications technology:

1. Traditional service and program delivery mechanisms (the “**public service**”) need to continue providing high quality services through traditional means to ensure equitable and effective access. These services need to adopt components of the new technologies in an incremental way to ensure “smarter” service provision while not downgrading other forms of delivery.
2. New technologies need to be introduced which transform the very nature of the way citizens and communities interact with government. “**Intelligent agents**” such as kiosk and desktop online services, and e-commerce sites. “Channels” reach across traditional public service structures to reflect people’s patterns of interaction with government. Smart search agents open up the structure of government and allow a novel degree of accessibility.
3. Government itself is transformed by the new technologies, and new “**quality control and gatekeeper**” roles emerge in the transition.
4. Principles of equitable access and user choice lead to the consideration of options for “**integrated services**” that allow trialling and assessment by users of the value of the various forms of service delivery in a helpful and familiar context.

1.4 4 main strategic directions

Applying understandings of factors likely to “drive” uptake of government services online to these older and newer aspects of government service provision generated a range of possible activities within and among the service delivery platforms. From this matrix of activities, four key directions for strategic intervention could be identified:

1. Integrating service provision

The specific strategies proposed to enhance integration further were:

- A “Service Victoria” style One Stop Shop, incorporating physical shopfronts, call centre and online presence;
- The adoption and implementation of Commonwealth metadata standards to facilitate inter-government searching;
- Providing a *Government Online* directory online; and,
- Redesigning the main portal, *vic.gov.au*.

Work has begun within government of each of these strategies, and so most attention in this project focussed on:

- Providing consistency of addressing across government departments and agencies;
- Developing a whole-of-government plan to “flood” a transaction, namely the ability to pay government and utility bills; and,
- Planning for government services on the imminent new delivery platforms, WAP and digital TV.

2. Serving different user groups by “designing in” understandings of usage

Work has already begun within government on:

- The establishment of online interactivity in policy development; and
- Further attention to channels likely to be of high frequency because of their relevance, including the development of new channels and the establishment of protocols to preserve their special focus on usage.

This report also suggests consideration of:

- A Children's Channel, mining school project type information from sites across government, and cross promoting government online services kids can draw to their parents' attention;
- A Jobs Channel, either within government or outsourced, consolidating information on all Victorian public sector job vacancies which should themselves be accessible online;
- An expanded Bookstore Channel, allowing access to ALL government publications, whether for sale or free, whether available at the physical bookstore or elsewhere; and
- Strong cross promotion of *Government Online* services including trialing user customisation.

3. Ensuring excellent service delivery

This report elaborates strategies for:

- Establishing email as a third standard way of communicating with government alongside post and telephone;
- Providing user input into website design so that understandings of usage and principles of accessibility shape the structure and format of sites;
- Trialing user customisation of government websites; and,
- Managing feedback, particularly complaints, to ensure better service.

A further strategy, which would benefit greatly from work already undertaken with Commonwealth metadata standards for the whole of government, was identified but not developed further here because implementation is already in progress:

- Making available from major portals a human edited, open conversation, smart search agent.

4. Cross promotion and marketing

While the development of internal and external marketing strategies (with an emphasis on meshing of services, cross promotion and training internally, and on targeting and collaboration externally) was beyond the scope of this report, their importance was noted. The report recommends the development of comprehensive marketing strategies especially in relation to:

- Increasing general community awareness of scope of government services and their availability online;
- Encouraging the atmosphere of security and trust within which people would be likely to trial government services; and
- Promoting the re-use of government services by previous users.

1.5 Evaluating performance

The importance of evaluating the relative success of various strategies implemented was identified in the brief for the project. A survey of existing data sources indicated that while a substantial amount of material already existed and was collated to measure access, use and effective use from both user and provider agency perspectives, three further major types of supplementary information were required:

- A benefit/cost analysis of currently available online transactions.

Work has already begun in this regard, and results will become available throughout 2001. Additional evaluative data is suggested in the form of:

- Tracking of "paths" to and from a targeted number of key access sites; and,
- Quantitative studies of use and non-use of online services generally, and Victorian Government online services in particular.

2 Governments move to deliver services online

Governments around the world are moving systematically to increase the contact their citizens have with them online.

Three main rationales are put forward for this movement:

- **building the “smart society”** - where citizens have the skills and knowledge needed for enterprise and participation in the “information rich” twenty first century;
- **increasing the quality of government’s interactions with citizens** – both in the ease of access it gives to members of the community, but also in the business re-engineering that ensues to allow online service delivery;
- **increasing the cost efficiency of delivering government programs and services** – although there is some dispute about whether these savings will come when adequate numbers of people have migrated to the new service delivery structures or not, since there is little concrete evidence as yet that online service delivery is necessarily cheaper.

The belief that all services might be delivered more cheaply online grows from the conviction that they will all be able to be automated. And, indeed, it is important at this stage to challenge the assumption that online service delivery is or should be “automated” service delivery.

There is a large body of research that suggests that people, depending somewhat on their cultural background, age and gender, choose different modes of interaction and transaction generally depending on the type of dealing, and who they are dealing with.

While governments and their agencies enjoy a fair measure of “trust” in this context, this advantage is easily squandered if the new services are not of higher quality, do not give better access, and are not seen as affording a greater measure of choice and safety for the person using the system. In the Victorian context, the introduction of automated public transport ticketing might be seen as a harbinger of the problems that accompany such false assumptions.

It is also important to remember that the movement to online service delivery has happened only recently. The current Victorian government homepage, for example, has only been in existence for a period of three to four years. In the time since then, the online landscape has shifted. Citizens are demanding more and more services online. Citizens also do not wish to sift through complicated government structures in order to reach the information or transaction they require. In this sense the challenge for government is to provide as many services online as is practical and reasonable, while maintaining a level of service that guarantees access and equity for all citizens, in both the online and physical worlds.

CIRCIT was selected by Multimedia Victoria to advise on maximising the uptake of Victorian government services online. The consultancy involved a round of stakeholder interviews, extensive research into domestic and international trends, close interactions with a Steering Committee and detailed implementation and costing plans. This report draws on all of the above as well as the marketing and communications knowledge of Stanley & Milford Marketing.

When we speak of the uptake of services online, we need to specify the scope of these terms in this report:

3 Definitions

3.1 “Uptake”

Uptake of government services online, in this context, can be taken to mean:

- The rate at which repeat users of an online service return to that service; or
- The rate at which new users are introduced to a service; or
- The number of users accessing government services through electronic channels; or
- The number of times a page or site is accessed, including page hits and links.

The importance of a positive evaluation by those who use the services of the quality of the service so delivered cannot be understated, and becomes, in this project, a pivotal determinant of strategies to be proposed. Positive evaluation of the quality of online services by those who use them has become, in this project, a pivotal factor in the assessment of such services.

3.2 “Maximising Uptake”

Clearly, there is already a certain amount of ‘uptake’ of government services online. Maximising that uptake can also mean several things, including:

- Migrating as many users as possible to online channels; or
- Migrating all users to online channels; or
- Making transactions available online simple, secure and reliable; or
- Segmenting user groups and focussing instead on those most likely to access online services.

Maximising uptake also carries with it another component, namely: access. There would be no point marketing government services online if citizens did not have the requisite devices (and resources) to access these services. ABS figures indicate that the number of Internet-connected households in Australia is indeed rising. According to AC Nielsen, the number of Internet users in Australia rose above 7 million in August 2000. The number of public access terminals, in Victoria at least, is also being increased. However there will always be a percentage of the population who do not go online. Therefore maximising the uptake of online services needs to be balanced against another requirement: providing consistency of service to Victorians, regardless of the mode of communication. Access issues are being dealt with through other areas of government program development (*Skills.net*, *Vicnet* etc) and are not within the scope of this project.

3.3 “Government Online”

This phrase is taken to mean all government services accessible via electronic means, that is: all [Victorian] government web sites, channels and home pages. In addition, it can also be taken to include other communications channels, including e-mail, call centres, and kiosk services (such as *maxi*, although it should be noted that *maxi*, because some consumer research has recently been conducted on it, is outside the scope of this consultancy).

Government services online encompass both the provision of information and the facilitation of transactions, whether they are financial (bill payment), obligatory (change of address for electoral enrolment) or voluntary (making a submission to a department’s community consultation). It also refers to other more innovative uses of online technology, including virtual voting.

3.4 “Strategies”

Strategies, in this report, shall be taken to mean groupings of actions that when performed together maximise the uptake of government services online.

4 Strategy Development Process

The strategies proposed to the Steering Committee were developed by identifying **four areas of operation** for Government Departments and agencies in the movement to complement existing Government service delivery with delivery modes made available by new information and communications technology.

Six principles of effective use, known from existing research to drive user uptake of services online, were applied to each of these areas of operation, to generate a **matrix of activities** likely to lead to increased and more beneficial use of Government services online. Sometimes these activities were gleaned from local, national and international research; in other cases they were “brainstormed” with stakeholder departments, agencies and channels.

This matrix of activities was then used as a basis for generating strategic approaches that incorporated leading edge actions to propose this series of strategies.

4.1 Areas of Operation

As the delivery of Government services changes with current modes of service delivery initially complemented, and sometimes ultimately replaced, by better modes made available by new communications technologies, four new areas of activity become necessary:

4.1.1 Public servants

Existing departmental and agency service staff need to maintain the ability to continue or improve the current modes of service delivery while supplementing them with new types of service delivery that add value for both those who use and provide the services.

4.1.2 Intelligent agents (GOL)

The introduction of new information technologies, both software and hardware, allows better service to those who seek to interact with government across the range of

its functions. In instances, these new service modes are more efficient; on other occasions they are consistent with government policy that seeks leading edge participation by the Victorian community in the new economy emerging as a result of them.

4.1.3 Gatekeepers & Quality Control (Central Agencies)

As Departments and agencies re-engineer their processes and systems to deal with the growth in online access, the maintenance of the quality of information and services provided, and the oversight of the manageability of the new forms of access becomes a key component of government activity. Similarly, ensuring that the new modes of service are user focussed, and deliver equitable and beneficial results for the whole community requires a gatekeeper function to be developed.

4.1.4 Integrated Services

The “one stop shop” concept, to make Government services available in an integrated across the counter, by phone and online, has proved remarkably successful in various jurisdictions (e.g. Service Tasmania, Service New Brunswick), and has also been applied successfully within some Departments and agencies. It responds directly to known research about the benefits of “choice of channel”; it serves the equity requirements of government policy, and provides for the “migration” of users across service modes. The question of whether it is a central service is one addressed within this project.

These areas of operation are shown diagrammatically below:

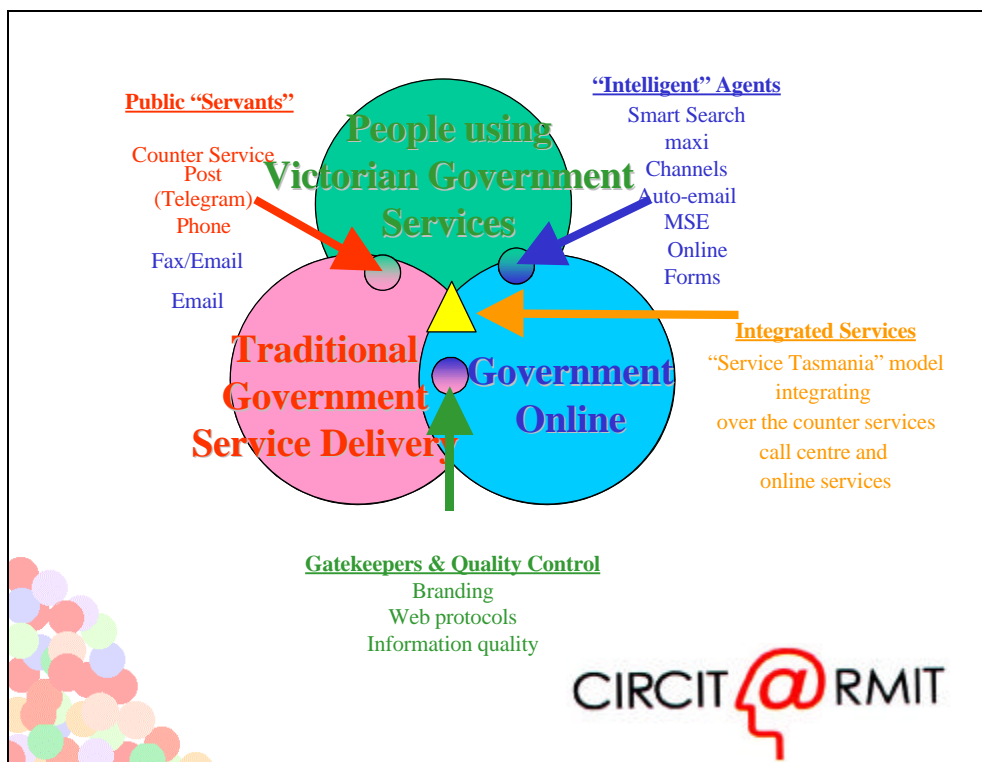


Figure 1: Emerging operations in Government Service Delivery

4.2 Principles of Effective Use

In each of these areas of operation for Government in the transition from physical to the electronic means of service delivery, known principles of effective use can be applied to identify types of activity likely to promote increased uptake. These principles

integrate three perspectives in an understanding of effective use:

- a user perspective (detailed at #3.2.1ff);
- a service provider perspective (including constructs such as efficiency, manageability, profitability and service improvement); and,
- a community perspective (with emphasis on concepts of equity, and growth in social capital).

These latter two perspectives are applied to develop the criteria for selection in the prioritisation of strategies by the Steering Committee detailed below (cf. #4.1). Briefly stated, these principles of effective use from a user perspective are:

4.2.1 Relevance to Daily Activities

A fundamental principle when designing any service is its relevance. The starting point when assessing relevance is always the user – how will this service be used? Will it be seen as convenient to conduct transactions in this way? The provision of a 24-hour capability for financial transactions, for example, will be relevant to users whose activities do not fit into a 9 to 5 paradigm.

This is particularly true of services offered online, as they exist within a new transaction space, where business hours are irrelevant. This being said, not all transactions are appropriate in an online environment. Analysis of user activities and needs provides a relevance focus for assessing which services should be offered, in which format.

4.2.2 Location of Access Points

In the context of online services, the location of access points may appear irrelevant. However, user migration from physical to electronic environments depends, to some extent, upon the location of kiosks, one-stop shops and touch screens. In an online environment, the same principles apply. How easy is the service to locate (that is, how recognisable is the URL)? How should it be marketed?

The question of access in general is also important. How many users within the community have home access to online services? Recognition of different levels of usage amongst (for example) different age groups leads to an emphasis on public access, cheaper or subsidised devices and staff-mediated transactions.

4.2.3 Ease of Use

Ease of use of online services depends on the quality of the interface, as well as user skills. In terms of the interface (for example, the web site), protocols and guidelines should emphasise simple layout and language, intuitive navigation and the availability of help, both off- and on-line. The development of

effective search engines also makes an online service easier to discover.

A principle of ease of use should reflect the differences between users when they approach new technologies. For example, 'early adopters' of technology will usually have fewer problems adjusting to an online service's functionality than will 'laggards'. An effective government service will provide the same level of usability for all user groups.

4.2.4 Trust

While users are more likely to trust a government brand than a commercial one, the theme of trust is still an important one, especially when governments provide the capability for financial transactions online. In this context, issues of authentication and receipt, privacy, encryption and the provision of personal and business information can influence a user's level of comfort within the transaction.

Branding of government services also becomes an issue of distinguishing the publicly owned from the private. Co-channelling initiatives, for example, may effect a user's perception of government, to the latter's detriment. By comparison, the provision of mechanisms for user feedback (whether by way of an online form or a complaints line) may increase user trust in a government service.

4.2.5 Choice Of Channel

Providing a range of channels across which users can conduct their transactions leads to more effective use of those channels, in that users can choose which option is more convenient or useful for themselves. It also means that users who are uncomfortable with new technologies have the choice of continuing to conduct their business with government through traditional channels. This is also an equity requirement placed upon government.

4.2.6 Incentives

Put simply, incentives to migrate to online services may be required in order to convince users of the worth of such services. For example, a discount on a license purchased online may lead to greater uptake of online services in general. Governments should be aware here also of equity issues and the need for detailed cost analysis of any proposed financial incentive. In other cases, the

incentive may be as simple as a faster processing of a speeding fine, doing away with the need to queue for the same service in a physical environment.

4.3 Activities that drive uptake

The Steering Committee and other relevant stakeholders were asked to suggest specific activities in each of the identified areas of operation and consistent with the principles of effective use to form the basis upon which strategies known to be likely to increase uptake could be developed. A summary of the main activities derived is in Appendix 1.

5 Proposed Strategies

The strategies tabulated at Appendices 2 to 5 below were arrived at through stakeholder meetings, CIRCIT research and workshoping, consultation with *Multimedia Victoria* and in collaboration with *Stanley & Milford's* work that leads to an understanding of the differential impacts of uptake strategies on market segments.

They fall into four broad strategic directions:

- **Integrating service provision**
- **Serving different user groups by “designing in” understandings of usage**
- **Ensuring excellent service delivery**
- **Cross promotion and marketing**

Additionally, the brief for the project identified the development of **an evaluation strategy** as an outcome for the process.

5.1 Selection Criteria

It was at the stage of prioritisation by the Steering Committee that service provider and community benefit principles of effective use were introduced into the strategic development process. The Steering Committee was invited to assess each strategy by asking:

of its component activities, were they:

- **able to be implemented**
- **consistent with government policy directions**
- **not duplicating an existing program**
- **able to be measured for impact?**

Component activities were eliminated if they significantly infringed one of these criteria.

of the strategy as a whole, should it have high priority on the basis of:

- **its likely impact on user uptake**
- **it representing industry leading practice**

- **its broad cost**
- **the likelihood it would attract significant user support**
- **there being a gap between existing services and the proposed strategy?**

Strategies (or in some cases parts thereof) were adopted or modified for further evaluation in the light of these criteria.

5.2 Explanation of Strategic Directions

Below can be found a brief explanation of each of these strategies, as well as an indication of the conclusions reached by the Steering Committee and CIRCIT.

5.2.1 Integrating Service Provision

This group of strategies addresses the whole of government approach to providing integrated, shop-front, Internet and phone services in an efficient and practical way.

5.2.1.1 A Service Victoria one-stop shop, call centre and URL

This approach has been trialled in several jurisdictions – notably, Tasmania and New Brunswick, Canada. One advantage of a shop-front system is that it can act as a migrating agent for users who are unfamiliar with government services online. As the *Citizens First* (Canada) report noted, when users are faced with having to conduct a range of transactions with the government, they prefer to do all of them at once, in the same place, through the same person. The Singaporean and the *Shell Touch* experience suggest that when counter staff assist people to use the Internet at shop fronts it is a useful way of encouraging migration to Internet alone services.

The proposed *Service Victoria* shop-front system should provide these kinds of service, including:

- a highly accessible system of shop-fronts throughout Victoria, distributed by council area, or location of post offices, council chambers or community centres;
- an integrated desk-top system for operators, making it possible for users to transact across the same range of applications available to users in other mediums; and
- cross-platform promotion, using the current Government call centres to advise on services available via shop-fronts and/or the Internet.

It will also be important to seek user input about location of outlets, time of opening and the like, and to brand the new service in an attractive, and researched way (GOVIC was suggested during the consultations, and would seem to be worth testing).

CONCLUSION:
The Steering Committee chose not to investigate this strategy as part of the consultation, due to the work already being done within government to develop Service Victoria.

IMPACT:



CONCLUSION:
The issue of cross-platform promotion will be incorporated into the whole of government marketing strategy.

IMPACT:



5.2.1.2 Provide consistency of addressing & directories

One problem currently being faced by government agencies and departments is inconsistency of URL and e-mail addresses – this is especially true of the government channels e.g.:

www.business.channel.vic.gov.au
www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au.

Consistency of addressing potentially makes an online service easy to recall and discover. It also allows for intuitive navigation on the part of the user. For example, if you know that the education channel is

www.education.vic.gov.au

then you should also be able to type in

www.youth.vic.gov.au.

This issue is partly compounded by the fact that some Victorian agencies have not registered themselves under the *vic.gov.au* domain; and also by the lack of a whole of government approach to web site naming and registration. It should also be noted that elsewhere in the world, a similar proliferation of addresses prevails. For example, some States in the United States choose not to use the *www.state.[initials].us* domain.

The provision of directories of government websites and e-mail contact addresses would provide value to users in that government

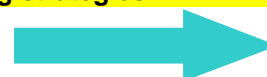
departments would be easily identifiable; individual and/or local responsibility could be easily discerned (subject to privacy and security provisions); and users could be made aware of the range of options available to them in dealing with government online, via a relational database and search engine.

Market research conducted by Stanley & Milford emphasizes that people want to look things up “locally” – they use telephone directory assistance (1223) or local councils to locate government services in their area.

Directories of government services online are currently available, albeit in an abridged and unclear format. The Commonwealth government’s GOLD directory is an excellent example of such a service. The latest (hard copy) directory of government websites in the United Kingdom provides another good example of an integrated, web-specific directory. Such a directory in a Victorian context would need to be available online (including in a downloadable, [e.g. PDF] format), at shop-fronts and via government bookshops.

CONCLUSION:
The Steering Committee recommended that the strategy dealing with directories be incorporated within the e-mail and marketing strategies.

IMPACT:



CONCLUSION:
The issue of consistent addressing was seen as being important if difficult to achieve in the short term and will be included in the e-mail strategy.

IMPACT:



5.2.1.3 Integrate Government Services (Federal, State, Local) and co-channel, (Utilities, Non-Government Organisations)

Market research suggests that people in the community make no distinctions between levels of government when accessing government services online. Providing an integrated service model, that incorporates local, state and federal services (as with the BLIS system on the Business Channel), would provide value to users by reducing the number of times they have to contact government; raising awareness of services actually offered

by the three tiers of government; and simplifying bureaucratic procedures. Integration can also be taken further, to include services formerly offered by government-owned utilities and agencies (*Tourism Channel* and *VicTrip* are two good examples).

The possibility of co-channeling with business is also flagged, subject to the effect this would have on the government's branded space. A previous piece of CIRCIT Research, *The User's Perspective of Online Government Services* concluded: "Without abandoning all of their concerns about security, people are more inclined to trust online government services than commercial services [with a few exceptions]."

The flooding (that is the provision of a **complete** range) of transaction types (e.g. rates, or utility bills) would arguably increase uptake of online services by making a transaction available to the maximum number of people.

For example with *maxi*, currently only a handful of councils enable you to pay rates via the Internet, kiosk or IVR. Similarly, only two councils allow payments of parking fines through these channels. The use of the bank based, integrated IVR/Internet system, *Bpay*, is growing, although few Council webpages identify it as an online payment option. If a ratepayer could pay his/her rates at any place and any time, via the Internet, the value in the transaction would be increased convenience and speed, as well as the possibility of migrating to other services, when prompted.

Various other approaches to flooding have been suggested: flooding all transactions within a single life event (as *British Telecom* are doing for *UK Online*) or flooding all transactions for a specific user group.

The approach taken here was adopted because of the likelihood that flooding by common transaction (bill paying) is likely to have the greatest impact because of its **general** relevance to **frequent** activities.

A series of obstacles still impedes such integration, particularly at the local council level. Research being conducted by the University of Sydney suggests that while many councils have begun to create their own online services, some have opted for brochure sites rather than any truly transactional functionality (<http://localgov.arch.usyd.edu.au>).

Research done as part of this project sheds light on the state of readiness for online services within local councils. Other potential future obstacles include the development of new platforms for the delivery of online services (e.g. WAP).

CONCLUSION:

The Steering Committee decided to explore more fully the flooding of transaction types. It is noted that in Victoria, MMV is also undergoing a process of evaluating and encouraging the preparedness of local councils for the introduction of online services.

IMPACT:



CONCLUSION:

The establishment of a working party to plan for new delivery platforms will be taken up as part of the Service Standards strategy.

IMPACT:



5.2.1.4 Redesign the *vic.gov.au* portal or establish a second, service-based portal

The Victorian Government home page currently serves as a portal to specific government services. It also allows users to conduct transactions via *ME (Multi-Service Express)* and search for information via a life events search engine. The site was first launched in 1995 and revised in 1999. It is currently in the process of being re-designed.

Such a redesign should remove confusion for users by

- establishing a clear branding hierarchy,
- promoting government channels
- providing an effective search engine to facilitate inter-government searching.

It should also:

- comply with usability guidelines, including W3C accessibility guidelines;
- give access to improved directory services;
- allow for e-democracy forums; and,
- seek to use "user focused" language rather than the language of the "structure of government".

An alternative would be to develop and promote a second portal with a transactional focus, leaving *vic.gov.au* as a portal for all government information.

CONCLUSION:

The Steering Committee noted the work already being done on this strategy and decided not to investigate the redesign of *vic.gov.au* as part of this consultation.

IMPACT:



5.2.2 Serving different user groups by “designing in” understandings of usage

Segmentation of potential users of online services quickly reveals an astounding variety in the population’s attitude towards and ability to use online services. Strategies to manage this diversity are explained below.

5.2.2.1 Focus on *frequency* channels

The channel concept as implemented by Victorian government agencies emphasises the need for channels that provide ‘a comprehensive and integrated suite of information and/or transactional services, relevant to (user) needs.’ In this respect, channels are not hindered by agency or departmental requirements – the information and services collated in the channels represent a cross-silo scope, enabling users to obtain the information they need without necessarily possessing knowledge of government structures and organisational responsibilities.

An important element of a channel strategy is establishing channel protocols and guidelines. The intent is to achieve the greatest possible consistency and synergy between channels while preserving departmental and agency autonomy. Three new channels were identified in the stakeholder discussions as *frequency* channels, having the potential to increase the uptake of government services online:

- a children’s channel;
- an online government bookstore (making **all** publications available regardless of whether or not sold through *Information Victoria*); and,
- a life events channel (similar to the Singapore Government e-citizen portal: http://www.ecitizen.gov.sg/index_low.html).

Research for the redevelopment of *Multi Service Express* suggests a comprehensive approach to life events of this kind. The potential development of a “youth” channel is currently under investigation and could be seen as having similar potential in this area.

CONCLUSION:

The Steering Committee decided to cost and evaluate a Children’s Channel, dependent upon time and resources available within the life of this project. The issue of channel protocols and guidelines will be discussed as part of the broader ‘Service Standards’ strategy.

IMPACT:



5.2.2.2 Establish Interactivity

Interactivity in this sense refers to a citizen’s ability to join and contribute to online forums, discussions and mailing lists specific to government. Often labeled ‘e-democracy’, these kinds of measures have been trialled around the world with varying results. For example, E-Gov (<http://www.indygov.org>), an online forum for citizens of Indianapolis, USA, sounds laudable in theory but in practice is limited to specific topics. SA Central is another (local) example of such a service.

Governments are often wary of ‘opening up the floodgates’ to citizens’ complaints and frustrations via online forums. There is a perception that such fora quickly descend into graffiti and mindless commentary.

One possible solution to this is a mediated forum, or a forum in which a Minister or public representative is online for a certain amount of time (cf. the US Governor example, the WA Premier’s recently successful online forum and the current Australian practice with talkback radio).

Making the topics relevant to community concerns is another way to guide the debate. For example, the government would arguably benefit from an online discussion of the State’s ICT policy.

Online consultation is already taking place within some Victorian agencies – for example, the Department of Infrastructure’s community consultations take place via e-mail. Online feedback about the standard and quality of online services is a valuable component of monitoring and evaluation.

In this sense, citizens' participation in government online is multi-faceted. A whole spectrum of initiatives should be considered – from the practical (for example, the provision of a Minister's e-mail address) to the fanciful (see South Australia's virtual electorate proposal, or Berlin's virtual citizenship).

CONCLUSION:

The Steering Committee reported that the Victorian government has bought the software used by SA Central and is currently planning a trial online forum. This strategy therefore will not be considered in further depth in this consultation.

IMPACT:



5.2.2.3 Strong cross-promotion of GOL (government online) services

Marketing research indicates that government online services are best marketed with messages tailored to specific market segments, rather than through broader general approaches.

As government information exists in many formats and physical locations, online services should be promoted wherever government information is displayed, or wherever transactions occur. This should form part of a wider strategy aimed at 'meshing' services. That is, providing an entry point URL on all printed and other communications; promoting call centres and other channels on government websites; and leveraging other GOL programs to promote uptake (e.g., *Easy As Net*, *i@*, *Channels Marketing Group*).

CONCLUSION:

The Steering Committee decided that cross-promotion should be incorporated into a "Marketing" strategy.

IMPACT:



5.2.3 Ensuring excellent service delivery

The concept of excellent or best-practice customer service is a familiar one. In an online environment, however, more work needs to be done on designing web sites from a user-centric perspective. This grouping of strategies aims to address some of these gaps in understanding and practice.

5.2.3.1 Engineer understandings of usage into the website development process

User-centric design puts the user first. This involves incorporating user desires and requirements into the initial design process (as opposed to user testing once a design has been completed). A truly user-centric design will also incorporate user concerns at every stage of the development process, and will provide for feedback at every available opportunity.

For government, the importance of user-centric design is increasing. Governments must respond to issues of access, affordability, usability and functionality in a way that reinforces the sense of trust they enjoy in the community in relation to online services. This means providing an open user advisory mechanism on each government site; devising and implementing a whole of government design policy; and establishing a system to track and dynamically exchange information for redesigning web sites.

Internally, government must also ensure that responsibility for a department or agency's web presence is located within service delivery units, rather than IT or communication departments.

CONCLUSION:

The Steering Committee agreed that this strategy of "engineering in" understandings of usage is deserving of greater attention. CIRCIT will evaluate and cost the implementation of this strategy.

IMPACT:



5.2.3.2 Establish e-mail as a third communications channel

Research indicates that e-mail is indeed the killer application of the Internet. E-mail is used by a large majority of users. Recent UCLA research indicates that e-mail usage is at the 78% level or higher. It provides for speedy communication at a cost far lower than other communications channels. Web based e-mail is also regarded as a migrating agent, in that it encourages use of the Internet via links.

From a government perspective, there are many possible applications for e-mail. Many departments and agencies already use e-mail as a communications channel. There is potential for e-mail to eventually become as

ubiquitous as postal and telephone services. This will change users' expectations of government.

The establishment of e-mail as a third communications channel would involve some element of reorganisation across departments. The need for consistency in policy on receipt of e-mail, for example, while being addressed by a whole of government policy, lacks in its implementation at an individual level. There is a need for more effective dissemination of policies on e-mail within government.

Other possible strategies include the introduction of fax/e-mail software (already being used by Department of Infrastructure); initiating partnerships for the provision of e-mail addresses for all Victorians (as per the South Australia example); and publicising government e-mail policies within the community in order to increase public trust in the medium.

There is sometimes a tendency to assume that "online" = "automated" in discussions of service provision. However, e-mail itself is an online medium, and in some instances and with some groups in CIRCIT's recent research, the medium of choice for certain communications. Its use to deal with government across the range of government services should be open to the user as a matter of choice. This is especially true given the evidence for e-mail as the "killer application".

CONCLUSION:

The Steering Committee agreed that establishing e-mail as a third standard channel for communication with government should be documented thoroughly.

IMPACT:



5.2.3.3 Select a "smarter" whole of government search engine

The provision of intelligent search agents makes an online service more valuable to users in that they can easily locate or discover the information and/or sites most relevant to their needs. From a government perspective, such a search engine would need to be able to effectively sort through meta-data provided by all three tiers of government in conformity with the national standards being developed. *Multimedia Victoria's* policy for meta data is also under development. In this way, the

search engine would mirror the functionality of the channels, in that it would cut across departmental hierarchies and jurisdictions.

Government may need to develop partnerships with commercial providers in order to identify and/or develop the most effective search engine.

Should it be an open syntax search engine (as the *Centrelink* search engine is claimed to be)? Should human agents edit it (as with the *Looksmart* model)? Should it be made available to all departments and agencies for placement on their front pages? How can the data extracted from a search engine be used to improve a site's functionality?

There is a clear need for uniformity across government on this issue. A domain specific, human edited, leading practice, conversational agent or search engine would assist in maximising uptake by providing for this kind of consistency; by making relevant information easily discoverable; and adding value to government sites through the continuous collection of dynamic feedback.

CONCLUSION

The Steering Committee noted the work being done by the Department of Premier and Cabinet working party on selecting a better whole of government search engine and therefore decided not to explore this strategy in any further detail.

IMPACT:



5.2.3.4 Provide for users to customise their main portal

Customisation in this context refers to a user's ability to tailor what appears on their home page or site, according to their own needs and wishes.

Customisation should not be confused with personalisation, whereby a provider (of content or services) tailors a user's home page for them. Customisation carries the advantage of allowing user choice.

Further, customisation does not rely on inappropriate collation of a user's personal information – an option unavailable to government in any case, given equity considerations and privacy legislation that would scarcely allow the "unnecessary"

information collection and storage involved in personalisation.

The real value of customisation for users is that it enables them to store information about their preferences on their own PC or device (as opposed to sites keeping cookies). This strategy is in line with 'opt-in' approaches to marketing and receiving information.

Complementary to this is a sub-strategy of permission-based communication (or, user profiling), whereby users can opt-in to be notified of changes in legislation, new services available online, or reminder notices (e.g., for electoral enrolment and/or voting, changes to social security arrangements, jury duty notification and so on).

The Steering Committee agreed that user customisation of key government webpages should be explored in greater detail.

IMPACT:



5.2.3.5 Develop service standards

Several of the components of a whole of government approach to service standards have been included in other strategies already detailed. For example, a government-wide protocol for receipt of, triage and response to e-mail would fall under a general standards umbrella.

Other standards strategies may include investigating the option of providing incentives to users who access online services. Again, governments are restricted by principles of equity and so are unlikely to implement differential costing arrangements.

Nonetheless, overseas experience (for example, the Services New Brunswick model) shows that this kind of strategy does increase uptake.

Another strategy for government is expanding the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman to include user concerns about provision of government services online.

While it may be true that the Ombudsman would have an assumed jurisdiction, promotion of this fact would act to increase user trust in government, thus encouraging greater uptake of the services which require

the greatest trust – for example, financial transactions.

CONCLUSION:

The Steering Committee decided to document a standard service strategy incorporating several elements from other strategies already detailed. The issue of an Ombudsman was also seen as important, and will also be clarified as part of this consultation.

IMPACT:



5.2.4 Cross Promotion and Marketing

The marketing of online services falls into two categories: internal (among the staff of government departments and agencies) and external (to actual and potential users of government services online) communication and awareness raising. This being said, there is some overlap between the two, and instances where best practice in one can have unexpected consequences in the other.

5.2.4.1 Internal Awareness and Training

There is an existing communications strategy for raising awareness and understanding of government online amongst the Victorian Public Sector approved by *Multimedia Victoria* senior management in June 1999.

It has the following key components:

1. The term "Government Online" has reasonably high awareness within the Victorian public sector and therefore it is important that this term is consistently used throughout the communications strategy. It has been shortened to GO in communication materials.
2. The level of awareness and understanding of *Government Online* varies across Departments. As a result, the communications program will need to be tailored for each Department.
3. A combination of media will be used to convey messages to the Victorian Public service – with emphasis on electronic and face to face communications, as this was the stated preference of employees across the board.
4. The same research methodology should be used on a quarterly basis to measure improvement in awareness and understanding of *Government Online*.
5. The key challenge of any communications program is to attract the target audience's

attention. People pay attention to messages that are relevant to them. Relevance is created by **need** (I have to pay attention, as this is key to my job performance) or by **desire** (this message sounds like it could improve my life).

- It is likely that “Key Influencers”, “Strategic Reference Groups” and “Implementers” will be motivated by **need** to absorb GOL messages. They will attend presentations, read e-mailed messages, etc, because the progress of GOL, as measured by Cabinet Reporting, is directly relevant to their jobs. The “hook” to motivate these people to pay attention to our communications may only need to be the reference to Government Online.
- It may be a challenge to motivate the State Department employees to absorb GOL messages, as they do not **need** the information. They are busy, and receive a barrage of information, both in their work and personal lives. The GOL communications may appear irrelevant, or of low priority, especially if they are presented in a “look what we are doing” manner. The “hook” to motivate these people to learn about GOL must be **desire** – they will absorb messages that are relevant to them because they promise to improve their lives (by saving time, providing valuable services, etc). Basically, they will be interested in knowing about relevant things they can do.
- There will be a sub-set of “online enthusiasts” within all segments of our target audience. They will absorb messages about GOL because they are personally interested in e-commerce, ESD, BPR, or other surrounding topics. They will provide valuable word of mouth, as long as they think that the GOL projects have been well implemented. They will be interested in more detailed information. They may want to know what they can do, and how the service is being delivered.

As suggested in the documentation of several of the proposed strategies, migration of users between platforms is a very effective way to promote uptake of online services. People working in government departments and agencies can be key facilitators of this migration.

The two key elements in the internal marketing strategy to achieve this would be training and “meshing” (ensuring all communications in one medium point to alternative access channels). Call centre staff and web site developers would need to be trained in when to suggest or demonstrate an alternative platform to users.

Communication regarding the alternative platforms would also need to be strategically placed, so that users of a particular platform become aware of the alternatives.

The Steering Committee agreed to explore the option on the production of a training CD (possibly incorporating a whole of government directory) as a supplement to the existing internal marketing campaign.

IMPACT:



5.2.4.2 External Marketing Campaign

An overall external marketing strategy for Government Online would increase uptake and usage of online services by

- Branding online services appropriately
- Embarking on a communications campaign that promotes the overall messages of security, privacy, convenience and access
- Embarking on a communications campaign that also promotes the unique benefits of one stop shop, and other strategies that are implemented by GOL

A communications strategy should first be developed– this would cost a minimum of \$40,000. Responsibility and authority for implementation of the strategy would need to be allocated to a group that had the expertise to make decisions about brands, user relationship management and positioning. Victoria should adopt the practice of other governments and large corporations in having a co-ordinated approach to branding, and a customer orientated ESD brand.

The Steering Committee believed that, while the complete development of an external marketing campaign was beyond the scope of this project, marketing was a component of any strategies adopted. Stanley & Milford defined a marketing component for the strategies detailed below (cf. #6.7).

IMPACT:



6 Prioritised Strategies

What follows is a comprehensive documentation of the strategies nominated by the Steering Committee as being most likely to increase the uptake of government services online and not in train already in government. Research evidence, implementation plans, marketing strategies and costings are provided for each.

6.1 Flooding by Relevant Transactions

6.1.1 Research Evidence

The flooding of transaction types (e.g. rates, or utility bills) would arguably increase uptake of online services by making a specific transaction available to the maximum number of people. For example, Stanley & Milford's analysis of *maxi* suggested that usage increased when additional bills were added to the system. This observation was tempered by the fact that very few bill payment services are offered through *maxi*, leading to suspicion in the minds of users as to its actual popularity. Flooding of key categories formed a major recommendation from their study – this applies equally to government services offered online through *Multi-service Express (ME)*.

Currently, only a handful of councils enable you to pay rates via *ME* and *maxi*'s Internet, kiosk and IVR channels. Similarly, only two councils allow payments of parking fines through these channels. If a ratepayer could pay his/her rates at any place and any time, via the Internet, the value in the transaction would be increased convenience and speed, as well as the possibility of migrating to other services, when prompted.

The veracity of this assertion is demonstrated by an analysis of the ACT's online payments system. While the ACT presents a novel case, in that it is a city-state, figures for July 2000 indicate that 31% of bill payments were made between 5pm and midnight. Further, the use of the Internet for bill payment is expected to continue to grow, with the addition of other transactions in the near future, including traffic, parking and camera-related fines.

6.1.2 Implementation Plan

This strategy focuses on bill payment because the most significant moderator of effective use from a user perspective (and hence likely driver of uptake) is the ability to perform a transaction relevant to daily activities. Most people pay bills and the bill itself provides a prompt to transact. The most common bill payments related to government or quasi-government services (although some utilities are privately owned, the public does not discriminate between government and non-government utilities) are:

- Council rates, penalties and fees,
- car registration, and
- utilities payments.

This strategy proposes setting a **target of July 2001 for having ALL the following payments available online** (this includes web browser transaction, and/or secure e-mail transaction) from the main portal of the relevant organization and from *Multi Service Express (ME)*:

6.1.2.1 All local government rate, registration and penalty payments

With Local Government Authorities, this should not prove too difficult. Most already have access to an online payment facility. The most substantial change would be reformatting their homepages to make them more "transaction based", and making registration and penalty payments available through their online systems. Campaspe, Dandenong, East Gippsland, Melton and Whittlesea provide good models.

- At the 14 October 2000, most LGAs in Victoria (**61 out of 78**) had online payment facilities for at least rates, usually through the *Bpay* system.
- However, only **7** had a direct link to payments from their homepage.
- Most LGAs providing site specific search engines were able to deliver rate payment information at 2 or 3 levels of depth from their homepage.
- Few provided for permit renewal, parking penalty and animal registration payments.
- A substantial number of Councils do not accept credit card payment through *Bpay*.
- Councils often classify rate payment under the heading "Council Services" which is not an intuitive location for payments. Appendix 6 summarises the current situation.

Multimedia Victoria working with the *Office of Local Government* and the *Municipal Association of Victoria* should act to revise the target for all Councils having access to their online payment facilities for rates, fees and penalties accessible from their front pages to July 2001. The current local government strategy proposes that 50% of councils achieve e-payments by end of 2003. This figure has already been exceeded.

Some work is already underway: the local government strategy and implementation plan is critical to helping the remaining 20 local councils make achieve an online presence and have bill payment available online. The useability testing being undertaken for revising *ME* will also assist with improved access to bill payments, although significant leaps in service standards will only be realised with the redevelopment of *vic.gov.au*. Making the customer aware of the availability of online payments (whether through *Bpay*, *maxi* or other means) needs to be considered as part of the development of a comprehensive marketing strategy for the public.

This would involve:

- Helping the **9 Councils currently without a web presence or with sites under construction** (Buloke, Corangamite, Glenelg, Hepburn, Horsham, Maribyrnong, Murrindindi, Towong, Yarriambiack) to build one that is at least able to point to an online payment facility
- Helping the **17 Councils who appear not already to have an online payment system** (Ararat, Buloke, Cardinia, Glen Eira, Glenelg, Hindmarsh, Horsham, Hume, Maribyrnong, Mount Alexander, Moyne, Stonnington, Towong, Warrnambool, West Wimmera, Wodonga, Yarriambiack) to join or acquire one
- The establishment by negotiation of a quality service standard that would ensure a clear **e-payments link on the front page of each council website** (and in any search engine on the site).
- If the e-payment facility is through *Bpay*, the link should be to a page with instructions on how to use *Bpay* online, including, if it can be negotiated with *Bpay*, the drop down list of institutions providing the facility to their customers:
See: <http://www.Bpay.com.au>
- The establishment by negotiation of a quality service standard that would ensure that Councils made **rate payments, animal registration fees, parking permit**

renewals and PIN penalties payable through their e-payment system.

6.1.2.2 All VicRoads vehicle registration payments

VicRoads already uses the *maxi* system for registration payments, and with the development of their own "virtual office" will have all their payments and transactions available online directly in the next several months.

6.1.2.3 All water, electricity and gas account payments

The overwhelming majority of utility companies (publicly and privately owned) make Internet payment available to customers, most often again through the *Bpay* system. However, with the exception of *AGL* very few indicate clearly on their sites that this is the case or provide a direct link for electronic payment for these high demand transactions. *AGL's* homepage [<http://www.agl.com.au/>] could be seen as an exemplar in this regard. The situation at 14 October, 2000 is as shown in Appendix 7.

Multimedia Victoria, through the appropriate government agency, working with private and public sector utility operators should act to ensure that all utilities have access to their online payment facilities for residential bills accessible from their front pages by 1 March 2001.

This would involve:

- Helping the **2 Water Authorities who appear not already to have an online payment system** (Glenelg and Sunraysia Water) to join or acquire one
- The establishment by negotiation of a quality service standard that would ensure a clear **e-payments or Bpay link on the front page of each utility website** (and in any search engine on the site).

6.1.2.4 All Civic Compliance Victoria penalty payments

These payments are currently available online through *maxi*. Implementation relies only on changes to *ME*.

6.1.2.5 Changes to Multi Service Express (ME)

The strategy involves some change to the present structure of *Multi Service Express*:

- Redesigning *Multi Service Express* to include the first level categories “**Pay your rates**”, “**Register your pets**”, “**Renew your Parking Permit**”, “**Pay your electricity, gas and water bills**”, “**Pay your vehicle registration**” and “**Pay your Traffic and Parking Fines**” or whatever similar sensible suggestions come out of the useability testing of *ME* which is being undertaken now.
- Designing second level *ME* links to each of the 78 LGA e-payment links
- Designing second level *ME* links to approximately 30 utility e-payment links (Further consultation is needed with the Regulator General about which gas companies should be included at this stage. The general principle is that any new retailer in the utility area should be encouraged to adopt the standards and to participate)
- Optimally, having *Multiservice Express (ME)* redesigned to take advantage of this flooding. *ME* should be included as a “web object” (or a link taking the user out of but not away from the host site) on each of those e-payment sites it

identifies and on key government websites.

Once this process is complete, there needs to be a focussed marketing strategy implemented to heighten awareness and increase uptake.

6.1.3 Project Linkages

The local government strategy and implementation plan is critical to helping the remaining 17 local councils make bill payment available online.

The useability testing being undertaken for revising *ME* will also assist with improved access to bill payments although significant leaps in service standards will only be realised with the redevelopment of *vic.gov.au*.

Making the user aware of the availability of online payments (whether through *Bpay*, *maxi* or other means) needs to be considered as part of the development of a comprehensive marketing strategy for the public.

6.1.4 Resourcing

6.1.4.1 LGAs	Non-metropolitan Councils needing to develop websites should receive priority funding in the present round of Federal Government funding for local government online development. The remainder of the changes required by the strategy could be achieved by negotiation of service standards, and should incur not direct costs, but will require <i>Multimedia Victoria's</i> input and coordination with the use of requisite internal resources.	
6.1.4.2 VicRoads	No costs additional to those being incurred by VicRoads in their present website redesign are anticipated.	
6.1.4.3 Utilities	Similarly to the situation with LGAs, it is anticipated that all changes can be accommodated by the adoption of service standards protocols, and that the work required to achieve this can be undertaken using <i>Multimedia Victoria's</i> internal resources.	
6.1.4.4 Civic Compliance Victoria	No significant additional costs are foreseen.	

6.1.4.5 Multi Service Express	The redesign of <i>Multi Service Express</i> , and its being available as an object for inclusion on the homepages of agencies targeted by this strategy is estimated to cost:	\$25,000
6.1.4.6 Marketing	One component of a broader GOL marketing strategy, the initial stages of which are estimated to cost:	\$40,000

6.2 E-mail as a third channel of communication with government

6.2.1 Research Evidence

E-mail is identified in many studies of Internet use as the most used and most useful application of the Internet. 'E-mail' in this context incorporates existing Internet Service Provider (ISP)-based services, free Web browser-based services, short messaging services and future services for the transmission of data between individuals, either one-to-one, or one-to-many. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that up to May 2000, 33% of all Australian households had access to the Internet. International studies and market research indicate that e-mail is indeed the 'killer' application – that is, most (if not virtually all) Internet users access e-mail (see *Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide*, US Dept. of Commerce, 1999).

Compared to postal mail, e-mail is faster, more flexible and transmittable independent of time and the point of receipt. Compared to telephony, e-mail can be stored until accessed, maintains a record of the communication and effortlessly enables one-to-many dissemination if required. On the other hand, e-mail can raise concerns over privacy and the receipt of unwanted messages. Experienced e-mail users overwhelmingly appreciate these advantages, whereas casual users may be more influenced by the disadvantages or simply have little need to communicate electronically.

The use of e-mail changes the nature of communication and redefines the nature of activities. CIRCIT research (Singh and Ryan, 1999, Singh and Slegers, 1998) shows that Internet (in this case, read: e-mail) communication needs to be more explicit than interpersonal communication in order to

engender the comfort, control and caring essential for trust. This is because Internet communication lacks the information conveyed through body language, voice quality, tone and actions in face-to-face interaction. Internet communication also lacks a sense of what is not being said. Hence the information intensity of an activity increases. Many activities change in nature, primarily becoming *information* activities.

The South Australian government recently launched its *SA IE2002* strategy, with a focus on the importance of e-mail connectedness. Requests for proposals have been put out for private firms to design and implement a system for the state, including free e-mail addresses for all South Australians. The Victorian government's approach to e-mail has been less pro-active – for example, the *Connecting Victoria* statement promises to help every Victorian who wants one to obtain an e-mail address. This kind of policy direction places greater reliance on public access terminals and programs such as *Skills.net*.

Recent research suggests that the use of e-mail within organisations is increasing, as is management fear that this will lead to a 'flood' of e-mails. This is true not only of private companies but also government departments (see for example the Canadian experience). The reality is that flooding has not yet happened and is unlikely to in the near future. The introduction of e-mail to call centres (see report in *The Australian IT*, 12 September 2000, p21) suggests that the integration of different communication channels is not only possible, but also likely to lead to new efficiencies. According to *Ferris Research*, the overall benefit of having e-mail in terms of increased productivity equals about \$9,000 per employee, or a 15% productivity gain ("E-Mail Productivity Gains = \$9,000 Per Employee", *Investor's Business Daily*, 25 May 2000). The *Department of Justice* used this argument to introduce e-mail, claiming that there would be less resources spent on phone and mail within the department.

6.2.2 Implementation Plan

The Steering Committee agreed that the strategy of establishing e-mail as a third standard channel for communication with government and its agencies alongside post and telephony should be explored. The three main interventions needed to achieve this are:

1. Whole of Government Protocols
2. Negotiated workgroup practices
3. Individual skills

6.2.2.1 Whole of Government Protocols

Given the known transformative effect of e-mail on corporate communications, Government needs to actively embrace the new communications possibilities the medium offers and to provide a stable administrative structure (as comprehensive as that already existing for post and telephony) to encourage and support its effective use. Eight key areas need to be considered:

6.2.2.1.1 Addressing

Multimedia Victoria and the *Department of Premier and Cabinet* should begin a process to **revise and adopt a standard addressing format** for e-mail in Victorian government departments and agencies.

Convention seems to be favouring the following format:

firstname.surname@dept/agency.vic.gov.au

The following principles should be used for e-mail addressing and can extend easily to be guidelines for webpage addressing:

1. All Departments are first level domains, agencies and programs use first level domain names only on a needs basis.

2. Single word descriptors are preferred.
3. Where multiple word descriptors are needed (no more than 3) they are separated by periods.
4. Channels use the "channels" descriptor, until rebranded (cf. 10 below).
5. Water authorities use the descriptor "water".
6. "In-house" abbreviations that require an understanding of the structure of government are avoided.
7. Abbreviations are avoided, unless market research indicates they are in common use and are better brands, e.g. SES, TAFE, CFA, EPA.
8. "vic" or "victoria" is not repeated
9. "gov" is preferred over "com", "net" and "org" because of the trust the brand enjoys.
10. Portals, channels and Government business enterprises should be encouraged to adopt "branded" addresses if market research demonstrates that they would provide **better** accessibility. Freeza, VisitVictoria, VicRoads may well be examples of this.
11. http addresses (URLs) and e-mail addresses should as far as possible correspond.
12. In some instances, aliases should be used to ensure mail reaches the same recipient.

The table below shows some of the idiosyncracies of the current addressing system for selected agencies, and proposed "more intuitive" addresses workshopped by CIRCIT researchers for illustrative purposes:

Table 6.1: Indicative list of e-mail address domain names applying consistency principles

(A more comprehensive list appears at Appendix 8 below)

Department or Agency	Present address	Proposed address
Auditor-General	audit.vic.gov.au	auditor.vic.gov.au
Barwon Water Authority	barwonwater.vic.gov.au	barwon.water.vic.gov.au
Better Health Channel	betterhealth.vic.gov.au	better.health.vic.gov.au ^{3,10}
Building Control Commission	buildcc.com.au	building.control.vic.gov.au
Business Channel	business.channel.vic.gov.au	business.channel.vic.gov.au
Business Victoria	business.vic.gov.au	business.vic.gov.au
Casino and Gambling Authority	vcga.vic.gov.au	casino.gambling.vic.gov.au
Chief Parliamentary Counsel	ocpc.vic.gov.au	parliament.vic.gov.au
City West Water	citywestwater.com.au	citywest.water.vic.gov.au ⁹
Country Fire Authority	cfa.vic.gov.au	cfa.vic.gov.au ⁷
County Court	countycourt.vic.gov.au	county.court.vic.gov.au
Domestic Building Tribunal	vcat.vic.gov.au	tribunal.vic.gov.au
Education Channel	education.vic.gov.au	education.channel.vic.gov.au
Education, Emplt and Training	edumail.vic.gov.au (mail) eduvic.vic.gov.au (web)	education.vic.gov.au

Government Purchasing Board	vgpb.vic.gov.au	purchasing.vic.gov.au
Human Services	dhs.vic.gov.au	human.services.vic.gov.au
Industrial Relations	dsd.vic.gov.au	industrial.relations.vic.gov.au
Infrastructure	doi.vic.gov.au	infrastructure.vic.gov.au
Multimedia Victoria	mmv.vic.gov.au	multimedia.vic.gov.au
Museum Victoria	mov.vic.gov.au	museum.vic.gov.au
National Gallery of Victoria	ngv.vic.gov.au	gallery.vic.gov.au
Natural Res & Environment	nre.vic.gov.au	environment.vic.gov.au and natural.resources.vic.gov.au
Regulator General	reggen.vic.gov.au	regulator.vic.gov.au
State Revenue Office	sro.dtf.vic.gov.au	treasury.vic.gov.au
Training and Further Education	otfe.vic.gov.au	tafe.vic.gov.au
Vic Roads	roads.vic.gov.au	vicroads.vic.gov.au
Zoological Parks & Gardens Board of Victoria	zoo.org.au	zoo.vic.gov.au

In most cases, “grandfathering” of the old address structure would be possible, so that for a period of 6 to 12 months, old addresses and URLs would work with receipts and webpages notifying the redirections.

6.2.2.1.2 Directories

A directory of government services (contact numbers, names, addresses and so on) does exist in hard copy format, and so, presumably, it exists as a database as well. As far as online directories of government services, the only current example is the *A-Z of Victorian government websites* located on the *vic.gov.au* homepage. This directory should be replaced by a **comprehensive online directory of Victorian government along the model of the Federal government directory**, which can be found at <http://gold.directory.gov.au/tmpl/s.html>.

Assuming this directory can be incorporated into the redesign of *vic.gov.au*, it will increase the uptake of government services online by giving users a sense of the scope of services offered online, without confusing users with complicated government hierarchies and structures. Linking to the directory from key (cf. Table 7.2 below) government websites will encourage users to migrate to online services that they might not otherwise have known existed.

6.2.2.1.3 Triage

Policies in this area have already been formulated. See, for example, the *Department of Premier and Cabinet* circular of 16 March 2000, which sets out the procedures to be followed when receiving and responding to e-mail. **Existing policies for use of e-mail by Victorian Public Service officers should be clearly promulgated, and applied consistently to all communications with external parties**, particularly members of the

public. An official government e-mail address is effectively Departmental letterhead, and its use should carry equivalent weight. There are obvious exceptions to this analogy, where e-mail is used more like a phone, and reasonable usage for out of work purposes may be permitted.

The general principles developed in relation to the *Victorian Government Electronic Messaging System* are that:

- responses to e-mail correspondence should be electronic where possible
- Government e-mail facilities should be used only for official business
- all messages will be regarded as Government records
- the rules contained in the *Victorian Public Service Code of Conduct* are applicable to the use of e-mail
- the e-mail system is not to be used to satisfy curiosity about the affairs of others
- e-mail which is misaddressed should not be opened
- messages should not be “forwarded” if this is likely to lead to embarrassment of the sender or to violate the clearly expressed desire of the sender to restrict dissemination
- e-mail is not to be used for the public distribution of information gained by or conveyed to an officer in connection with the public service
- messages or items for which access is restricted by Government security laws or legislation are not to be sent by e-mail
- advertising by e-mail is not allowed
- all broadcast e-mail is discouraged

To enforce these protocols:

- The Government will not routinely monitor e-mails. Random audits may be conducted.
- The Government will respond to legal processes associated with security violations and fulfil its obligations to all parties under these circumstances.
- The Government will inspect the contents of electronic mail messages in the course of an investigation triggered by indications of impropriety or as necessary to locate substantive information for an investigation.

The dissemination of such policies needs to be rigorous, structured and coordinated consistently. **Responsibility for policy dissemination should be located within an appropriate area of each department**, for example, the Ministerial correspondence unit (or its equivalent) although this is not the same as saying that unit must respond to all e-mail.

In practice, e-mail policies vary from department to department. Some treat all e-mail as “executive correspondence”; others leave it to staff to exercise a first level triage function, sorting matters requiring upward referral from those which can be simply dealt with in the manner of a telephone query. Public servants should be able to respond to e-mails of a general nature without having to obtain permission to do so, and **contact officers’ e-mail addresses should be available on every department or agency webpage**.

This becomes not only a policy issue but also a resources issue. For example, the Department of Infrastructure, in seeking support for its e-mail policy, argued that encouraging e-mail will lead to cost savings, through less time spent answering telephone and postal inquiries. In general, departments need to be confident that their staff have received adequate training in the use of e-mail, and that they are aware of government policies and protocols regarding the appropriate style to be used when replying to various e-mail inquiries.

The preferred method of dealing with e-mail should **assign responsibility for triage, and provide training in “upward referral” to each staff member** of departments and agencies, as this is likely to lead to more efficient user service.

6.2.2.1.4 Response Standards

The *Department of Premier and Cabinet* policy also stipulates that response time to e-mail should be in accordance with local policy. Research conducted by CIRCIT suggests that these local policies vary, from instant response to no response at all. **A government-wide standard for response time of no more than 2 working days should be instituted**, subject to the special circumstances of individual departments and agencies.

Penalties for late reply to e-mail have been instituted in several agencies and utilities (for example, *Yarra Valley Water*). While such measures may not be appropriate in all situations (for example, compensating someone who receives no reply from the Department of Justice), **an evaluation of penalties for late reply to e-mail should be conducted with agencies or utilities that have already implemented such schemes**.

6.2.2.1.5 Receipting

The capacity for delivering automatic receipts to e-mail should also be provided in all department and agency e-mail software as a matter of course. Receipts should indicate that the e-mail has been received and opened and what the standard time for a reply is. Most standard e-mail packages (including *Groupwise*) will perform this function if configured to do so. The *Department of Justice*, for example, has indicated in its e-mail policy that this will be built-in to its new software but must be done manually at the moment.

6.2.2.1.6 Digital document archiving

This area has been covered by work done within the Victorian government. The implementation of the *Victorian Electronic Records Strategy* (VERS) is currently being developed at a departmental level.

6.2.2.1.7 Security

The perceived security of a citizen to government messaging ‘system’ is of paramount significance to users. Ordinary citizens will not increase their use of government on-line services beyond information seeking if there is not a perception of trustworthiness of the system.

Appropriate security requirements for e-mail services should be adopted in accordance with existing IT policies (for example, *Information Security Policy* (IT&T 14), current at May 1999) and based upon

clear standards (Australian Standard AS/NZS 4444:1996).

Additional protection for e-mail services should be based on clear assessment of risks to government services, infrastructure and business. For example, **virus protection software should be implemented across government** to protect against the high degree of risk from destructive macro viruses and worms, and procedures should be in place for regular updates of this software to guard against new variants. **People sending material to government departments and agencies, which contains viruses, should have e-mails returned with notification of problematic contents, and some advice on how to correct the problem.**

If confidentiality of information is required, **encryption of a standard appropriate to the purpose should be made available to end-users at the point of the transaction.** Appropriate standards will vary over time, and between applications (for example, confidential medical records may be classed as more sensitive than credit card details authorising a minor transaction). If authentication of users, integrity of contents and non-repudiation is required, digital signatures using approved certificates should be accepted. For further details on authentication, see the next section.

Privacy of personal information is as important in the public perception as security. **Privacy policies should be formulated based on existing legislation, CLEARLY PUBLICISED and include clear methods of enforcement of policies and prescribed penalties for breach of those obligations.**

6.2.2.1.8 Authentication

The use of formal authentication mechanisms for government to citizen communications, such as the use of public key infrastructures for issuance of digital certificates and recognition of digital signatures, may provide for increased availability of on-line services that require signature. However the use of digital signatures for binding legal purposes should not be implemented without appropriate recognition of certification authorities issuing certificates, particularly where the Government may bear liability. That is, the Victorian Government should not encourage the use of certificates, which can be generated through distrusted means, either via offshore certification authorities, or through self-generated certificates.

It is recommended that **certificates be accepted only from service providers that have undergone some form of evaluation acceptable to the business risk in accord with whole of government protocols**, with particular attention to registration processes and certificate issuance policies. Acceptable standards may be defined specifically for Victorian Government usage, and appropriate evaluation mechanisms for compliance against those standards developed. The existing *Identification and Authorisation For Online Transactions Policy* (IT&T-37), current March 2000, provides for 'due diligence' checks against a number of items.

Australian standards for public key authentication frameworks are under development by *Standards Australia* (AS 4539 series), and the Commonwealth Government has established the *Gatekeeper* evaluation framework for use of public key technology in Commonwealth agencies. The *Australian Tax Office* is currently the only entity fully accredited under this scheme, although both *Certificates Australia* (a subsidiary of *Baltimore*) and *e-Sign Australia* (a subsidiary of *Verisign*) have been accredited to entry level status and a number of other companies are currently under evaluation.

These existing evaluation mechanisms could be more formally endorsed for use within the Victorian Government framework, for no outlay. Issuance costs for certificates used by the public could be absorbed by the Government, through the establishment of a Victorian Government certification authority, or outsourced to an existing accredited provider, or could be borne by users purchasing certificates commercially on as needs basis under pre-defined certificate policies acceptable to the Victorian Government.

It is imperative that, if e-mail is to be used as a standard method of communication with government, **access to the sources of acceptable certificates be provided at the point of transaction.** For example, if an up to date photograph is required for licence renewal, and it is to be sent by e-mail with certification, the licence renewal web page must contain details of how to use certification software and a link to where it is available.

6.2.2.2 Negotiated workgroup practices

CIRCIT research (Singh and Ryan, to be published December 2000) indicates that the

bulk of e-mail activity happens within a workgroup, and then among people and a small group of their external colleagues. It is also clear that the negotiation of effective use practices at workgroup level can obviate many of the problems associated with misunderstanding and "e-mail overload". To encourage the use of e-mail as a creative and transformative form of communication within the public sector, and in its external dealings, **Multimedia Victoria should initiate a seminar program to facilitate this type of discussion throughout the public sector.** Issues to be addressed in such a program might include:

- Availability and use of Discussion forums, such as list servers, web boards and internal and external newsgroups
- Use of copies and blind copies
- Limits on the number of e-mails exchanged on a subject before alternative methods of communication are used
- Timeliness of reading & response
- Preferred channels for different types of activity
- Timelines for sending meeting agendas etc
- How e-mail will be managed in someone's absence
- How to implement archiving policy in relation to retention & transfer
- Policy on formatting for different styles of message
- Length of messages and policy on attachments
- Whole of government policy and protocol awareness

6.2.2.3 Individual Skills

The experience of piloting workgroup discussions for the CIRCIT research suggests that they quickly identify areas in which individual staff have difficulties dealing with the

transformative nature of e-mail communication. Most training in the past, it was revealed, had been technical training in the use of the particular software package used organisationally for electronic messaging. While this was often useful, research indicated that it failed to address these broader communication training needs.

Multimedia Victoria should make available to departmental and agency management details of training packages which are available to address individual staff competencies in, at least, the following areas:

1. Use of *Windows*, *Unix*, *Novell* and similar operating system and networking platforms that sustain the various e-mail systems used;
2. Use of common e-mail protocols software (e.g. *Eudora*, *Lotus Notes*, *Outlook*, *Groupwise*) in departments and agencies. It is vital that these training programs contain information on receipting, archiving, deletion, attachments and filtering;
3. Victorian Government policies, protocols and service standards applying to the proper and effective use of e-mail for internal and external communication;
4. Specific training in "upward referral" and what types of e-mail are best dealt with as simple requests and which demand the attention of a superior or of the Ministerial Correspondence Unit or the like;
5. Understandings of how people use e-mail, the commonly preferred channels for various types of communication (e.g. formal notices v. simple responses to queries, or scheduling meetings) and how e-mail content can "migrate" people to more efficient forms of online use;
6. Formats and styles best used for differing types of e-mail communication.

6.2.3 Resourcing

The entire strategy does not require any particularly significant expenditure of additional capital or recurrent funds. It relies more on the coordinated development of departmental and agency approaches to the implementation and use of electronic messaging systems, based on a whole of government commitment to high quality communication in the various programs and services delivered.

In other words, monies already being expended would be spent better if such a policy framework were in place. Identified below are areas where additional funding would be required:

6.2.3.1 Whole of Government policies and protocols	<p>Directories: The development and maintenance of a whole of government directory of the quality of <i>GOLD</i>, the Federal government search engine</p> <p>Receipting & Virus scanning: Most organisational e-messaging systems now have such facilities as standard. Where this is not the case, the cost of obtaining them should be included in the next upgrade</p> <p>Response Standards: The only cost associated with the adoption of response standards with agencies trialling penalties for poor service.</p> <p>Security & Authentication: Dependent on the course of action adopted –</p> <p>“<i>User pays</i>” ... cost of webpage redesign which can be incorporated into future development</p> <p>“<i>Vic Govt Certification</i>” ... very difficult to estimate. Costs could be offset by onsale of certificates to other interested parties. Business case would need to be developed. Unlikely to be viable.</p>	\$100,000 p.a.
6.2.3.2 Workgroup facilitation	The development and implementation of a Workgroup facilitation program by <i>Multimedia Victoria</i> could be done using internal resources, with some additional consultancy resources for a “train the trainer” program. Estimated cost:	\$40,000
6.2.3.3 Individual training	The identification of available courses can be done with internal <i>Multimedia Victoria</i> resources, or the entire package (or parts of it, notably #3-6) could be purchased from a training provider. Costs for individual participation should be borne by departments and agencies as part of their general staff development programs. The usual cost of a one day training package of the types envisaged is:	\$300-500/person

6.3 Children’s Channel

6.3.1 Research Evidence

The channel concept as implemented by Victorian government agencies emphasises the need for channels that provide

‘a comprehensive and integrated suite of information and/or transactional services, relevant to (user) needs.’

In this respect, channels are not hindered by agency or departmental requirements – the information and services collated in the channels represent a cross-silo scope, enabling users to obtain the information they need without necessarily possessing knowledge of government structures and organisational responsibilities.

Children’s channels have been developed in other jurisdictions – for example, San Diego (<http://www.sannet.gov>) and Washington State (<http://access.wa.gov>). Several channels in Victoria (such as *Freeza*) do cover youth issues, albeit from a specific angle (in the case of *Freeza*, under-18s, drug and alcohol free

events). The new Legal channel also tailors itself to children, specifically children seeking out information for school projects. Indeed, discussions with various GOL stakeholders have indicated that demand for this sort of information is high, across departments and agencies.

6.3.2 Implementation Plan

The strategy envisages attention to the development of materials useful to school children by all government departments and agencies and establishing a Children’s Channel. Such a channel would be a valuable resource in its own right but would also be used to point to transactions that school aged children can tell their parents and others that it is possible to do online.

Two possible models for its development were originally considered:

6.3.2.1 Outsourcing

Victoria has a significant applications development capacity in relation to games. Additionally, there are several children’s content providers with significant local

presence (*ABC for Kids Online*, *Australian Children's Television Foundation*). It is highly likely that the task of developing and maintaining such a channel would be an attractive business proposition for a private website developer drawing on those resources. It would need to be funded, according to industry sources, at the rate of about \$250,000 for development and for first year maintenance, and at of the order of \$80,000 per year for ongoing maintenance. This would give a cost for the first three years of approximately \$410,000. This assumes that strategic development and information auditing will be done within government prior to development.

6.3.2.2 In house provision

There are already several successful Channels providing online government (and other) services in operation (*Business Channel*, *VisitVictoria*, *Land Channel*) and several beginning or near to it (*Education Channel*, *Legal channel*, *VicTrip*). These channels have been developed in the main in the public sector with estimates of a median cost as:

- \$60,000 for strategy development

- \$75,000 for an information audit (and re-engineering of business units)
- \$130,000 for content development and software building
- annual maintenance of \$80,000

6.3.2.3 Public/private partnerships

The present government's policy places strong emphasis on public/private sector partnerships in physical infrastructure development. Given the relative similarity of price estimates for the development of a Children's Channel in private and public sectors, a partnership in developing online infrastructure could well be considered.

Multimedia Victoria should seek to form a partnership with a private provider or consortium to develop a high quality VicKids' Channel. Government departments and agencies would bring to the project and knowledge of the information base within government likely to be valuable to the target audience, and also the trust and credibility that comes with government branding. A private provider would bring the knowledge of children's content development likely to make the site successful.

6.3.3 Resourcing

6.3.3.1 Children's Channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategy development • information audit • content development and software building • annual maintenance <p>Estimated 3 year cost:</p>	<p>\$55,000 \$75,000 \$130,000 \$80,000 p.a.</p> <p>\$500,000</p>
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6.4 "Engineering-in" Understandings of Usage and Service Standards

6.4.1 Research Evidence

The UK report "View From the Queue" stated that:

"The rate of adoption (of new ways to interact with government) is highly dependent on how well user needs are understood and internalised within the design, implementation and support for new methods."

This statement is an excellent example of the ways in which governments are attempting to bridge the gap between design and use.

Initially, the online presence of many governments was focussed on becoming visible, and providing as much information as possible about the workings of government. User research (e.g., by Stanley & Milford) suggests that users are not interested in government structures and hierarchies – if they visit government sites at all, it is to conduct transactions, whatever form these may take. Consequently, many governments are re-tailoring their sites. For example, the NSW government recently involved its users in detailed focus study groups, the results of which are producing a superior design for their State Internet site.

Engineering-in understandings of usage has two components: the design process and monitoring/evaluation. The latter component is dealt with in section 7. The former involves:

- Seeking information from users about their requirements;
- Designing for the greatest number of potential users;
- Building user needs into the design process, rather than at the testing stage.

There is a wealth of information available on the Internet with respect to useability and functionality of online services. See, for example, the W3C guidelines, the 'bobby' test site or the following sites:

<http://www.creativegood.com/>

<http://useit.com/>

<http://patricklynch.net/index.html>

<http://whatis.com>

<http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/manual/>

6.4.2 Implementation Plan

The research evidence is unequivocal in this matter: the single best predictor of likely use of an online service is its relevance to activities of daily life, and this relevance is most often moderated by the ability to "transact".

Government departments and agencies should adopt as a principle of design that all relevant TRANSACTIONS are accessible from their website's frontpage.

Many websites surveyed in this project had much greater emphasis on reflecting the structure of government, of departmental or agency programs, or on "broadcasting" internally valued information.

Further, there is little evidence that complexity or sophistication of visual design are major attractors. Indeed, W3C accessibility guidelines suggest that complicated graphics, frames and "popups" make the ability to transact difficult if not impossible for some users.

All government departments and agencies should immediately audit their websites for compliance with W3C Accessibility Guidelines and continue the process of conforming with accesibility provisions. New sites should be built to conform.

A whole of government policy should be adopted ensuring that every government department or agency with a website has a user advisory structure in place.

This may include a user reference group, online surveys or regular focus group

evaluation. A strategy is proposed in section 7.1 below, that would see the "promotion" of frequently used websites in the structure of access portals and transaction sites. A similar iterative rev-evaluation of the hierarchy and depth should be applied at department, agency, utility and LGA level.

All government websites should have a clear point of contact for users wanting to comment on the structure and functionality of the site. Sites should make it clear that such feedback is valued.

Current industry speculation suggests that the various protocols that now comprise the Internet's main means of information transmission, e-mail, web browsing, newsgroups, and file transfer protocols are likely to "disaggregate" as new delivery platforms become available. WAP will allow the delivery of e-mail and browser content (and a limited return channel) from mobile telephony devices. Digital TV is already being developed in the UK to perform some of these functions, and "datacasting" is almost upon us in Australia. Notionally, this should allow greater access to online services as content becomes less "computer" and keyboard dependent.

To ensure that a user perspective on government service delivery through emerging platforms informs the process, **Multimedia Victoria should instigate working groups that incorporate input from potential users on government service delivery on WAP and Digital TV.**

The introduction of standards for online services across the whole of the Victorian government presents something of a challenge, given departments' and agencies' multi-various activities and responsibilities. Problems encountered when attempting to introduce such uniformity include:

- a lack of communication;
- failure to disseminate information at all levels; and
- the fact that responsibility for protocols rests with different areas in each department.

Evidence gathered from interviews with key stakeholders suggests that efforts are being made to overcome these obstacles. The "e-mail" strategy (#6.2.2.1.3 above) suggests assigning responsibility for policy dissemination to a single point within departments and agencies. Presently, this

“single point” is often within the IT function of the organization.

It seems preferable that online service provision be seen equally as a business and communications function of an organization. **There should be a whole of government policy that building highest quality government online services requires input from service delivery and communications staff in organisations, as well as from IT staff.** Departments and agencies should manage their online presence accordingly.

Discussion with the State Ombudsman, Dr Barry Perry, indicated that he believed that current legislation would enable him to investigate user complaints about the quality, timeliness or the like of government online services in the same way that he investigates problems with other modes of service delivery. The legislation does not differentiate between modes of service delivery.

User problems identified through a well developed complaints process should be seen within provider organisations as valuable sources of intelligence for better service delivery.

Government Departments and agencies should develop protocols for dealing with complaints about online service delivery.

Government officers dealing with complaints about online service delivery should make users aware of the recourse they have to the Ombudsman if unsatisfied with the way their complaint is treated.

6.4.3 Resourcing

Few additional resources are required for implementation of such an emphasis across government. It is really more a question of adopting a “demand” side perspective on online services to supplement “supply” side solutions.

6.5 Customisation

6.5.1 Research Evidence

Customisation is where the user chooses to send information to a site outlining preferences they may have for the content or display of

information at the site. Typically, this information is stored on the user’s system in the form of cookies. Unlike the scenario with **personalisation**, the remote site does not store information about the user.

Personalisation does not conform with “Information Privacy” principles adopted by the Victorian government, even on an “opt in” basis, as the first principle enunciates **need** as the basis for data collection.

Customisation, however, can engender user perceptions of relevance of an online service by allowing them to view only the information and links they wish to see and use.

The South Australian *IE 2002* tender for free e-mail services features a requirement for provision of customisation software. The intention is to allow users (i.e. South Australian residents) to choose what appears on their personal home pages. While this approach is still in its infancy, it’s worth noting that other governments are considering it – for example, the Welsh government plans to allow users to customise their portals (although at this stage the only thing they can customise is the colour of the web page!).

There has been a recent surge in customisation software (cf: <http://myanz.com>, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/>), with a proliferation of programs including *DoDots*, *Snippets*, *Yodlee*, *Onepage* and *Octopus*. These programs vary in their cost and effectiveness. Private sites, such as *MyANZ* already allow users to choose from a variety of information sources to customise the way webpages are displayed.

The fact remains, however, that a great number of Internet users make no active choice as to the information they receive – in these cases, portal sites should consider providing a standard set, from which users can choose or which they can tailor as they see fit.

6.5.2 Implementation Plan

***Multimedia Victoria* should work with the Department of Premier and Cabinet to release a RFT for the provision of customisation software for inclusion in the redesign of *vic.gov.au*.**

6.5.3 Resourcing

6.5.3.1 Customisation	Inquiries made in the industry suggest that customisation software would cost in the order of:	\$30,000 - \$50,000
	plus 8 weeks of a software engineer's time:	\$20,000 \$60,000

6.6 Miscellaneous

In the course of the stakeholder consultations, and internal workshopping that accompanied this project, many suggestions emerged which were not immediately germane to the strategic directions developed, or did not receive high priority from the Steering Committee for the project. Some of them seemed, nonetheless, deserving of documentation for further consideration:

6.6.1 Development of a training CD, including directories

The development of a whole of government online directory has been proposed as part of the strategy for making e-mail a third standard channel of communication with government (#6.2.2.1.2). Pending its development, it was suggested that the current version of the hardcopy Government Directory would make a valuable addition to a training CD for Victorian Government staff. It would enable staff to direct enquiries to relevant e-mail addresses and websites, encouraging the migration of use between modes of service delivery.

The CD might also include information on how "meshing" (making sure that various avenues of access are advertised at other points of access) encourages uptake, details of Government policies and protocols in relation to e-mail, quality standards for web design and similar.

Multimedia Victoria and the Department of Premier and Cabinet should fund and coordinate the development an induction and training CD on Victorian Government services online for distribution to all Victorian Government staff.

Discussions with agencies that have already developed induction and training material in this format suggest that a CD which is low in video usage, but allows a moderate degree of interactivity (as would be necessary for the directory component) would cost of the order of **\$30,000**.

6.6.2 The Bookstore as a Channel

Discussions during the course of the project revealed that www.bookstore.vic.gov.au provided good access online for the purchasing of government publications available through the physical Bookstore.

It was suggested, however, that a "Bookstore Channel" needed to make available online all government publications (including free publications and those where individual agencies managed their sales in-house) if the concept of "flooding" was to have its impact.

This does not mean that all publications need to be available for purchase or acquisition AT that site. It would involve the consolidation into one database of all departmental and agency publications and a provision that links should at least be provided from the "Bookstore Channel".

Multimedia Victoria should initiate a working party with Information Victoria to investigate the plausibility and cost of substantially expanding the operations of www.bookstore.vic.gov.au to include ALL Victorian Government department and agency publications.

6.6.3 A "Jobs Channel"

This recommendation grew out of CIRCIT's internal workshopping of the proposed strategies.

The growth in the number of job vacancies being filled online in recent times has been, according to the anecdotal evidence of placement industry professionals, 'astronomical'.

The Victorian government currently operates a 'Tenders Channel' for government RFTs. The proposal is for a similar channel for public sector employment vacancies.

Such an initiative has already been trialled by the UK government (see <http://www.employmentservice.gov.uk/>). The service will, in the near future, become integrated with other government services, including social security payments.

A Jobs Channel would carry the advantages of reducing paperwork, providing a centralised and updated register of vacancies and encouraging greater use of e-mail amongst both public servants and citizens.

Multimedia Victoria should work with the Office of Public Employment to either develop a channel which gives prospective employees up to date information on Victorian Public Service job vacancies and ready means for applying for jobs online, or to make outsourcing arrangements so that all government job vacancies are easily accessible online as with government tenders.

In line with channel cost estimates given for the Children's Channel (but not further researched) the development of such a channel could be expected to cost of the order of **\$500,000** over 3 years. Outsourcing arrangements may ensure a similar result at significantly reduced cost.

6.7 External Marketing Strategies

The development of a complete marketing program is beyond the scope of this paper. **The material in this section (provided by Stanley and Milford) explores the five key elements to external marketing strategies for the uptake strategies detailed:**

- **Awareness and trial**
 1. **Point of purchase**
 2. **Single entry point**
- **Re-use**
 3. **Permission marketing**
 4. **Excellent customer service**
 5. **Customer input and feedback**

Individual agencies and Government bodies responsible for each particular strategic intervention should continue to communicate at a local level to their own catchment group of users.

Taking the example of "flooding bill payment as a transaction type" to illustrate how a marketing strategy would be developed to incorporate these elements might be useful.

Councils should use their local papers, council newsletters, website and community network to communicate their online payments and services.

It is unlikely that Victorians will visit a bill payment site, like *maxi* or *Multi-service Express (ME)* simply to browse. There must be an immediate need. Motivation to trial is also dependent on positive word of mouth regarding online payment security, privacy and ease of use. Communication, as part of an external marketing campaign for online services, could deliver the messages that all payments to Government departments and agencies are online, with reassurances about security and privacy.

6.7.1 Point of purchase

The *Online Behaviour and Attitude Study (maxi)* conducted in 2000 revealed that advertising online payment options on relevant printed bills or fines has more impact than any other marketing activity on uptake of bill payment transactions. Inserts (flyers) mailed with bills or fines are also effective.

6.7.2 Single entry point

Once the user has trailed the online payment option, their awareness of other bills that can be paid online is raised. This cross-promotion is heightened if a single entry point is advertised, rather than directing people to B-pay, *maxi*, Department websites, etc. For customer service to be maintained a deep linking strategy would need to be employed so that users are not forced to select the bill they want to pay from the single entry point, and then re-select once they have been connected to the service provider.

6.7.3 Permission marketing

The fact that all payments can be found through *ME*, will be useful if that site has a CRM strategy in place that includes giving users the option to be reminded by e-mail when regular payments are due (like rates, registration and utility bills). Subscribers could also be notified when a new payment service comes online. E-mail is the most effective marketing tool as it removes many barriers to trial (the user is already connected to the Internet when message is received, and they have a positive attitude towards online payment, as they have elected to receive notification).

6.7.4 Excellent customer service

Continued use of the online payment method will be encouraged if access and usability is optimised. *Gartner Group* also found that customers are loyal to sites that provide product breadth, information, ease of use and good navigational capabilities. The *ME* one stop bill payment shop could add value to the users by offering:

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): FAQs should be clear, concise and easy to find on a site. Queries that your site receives on a regular basis can help determine its content. Organize questions from the customer's perspective and refresh them frequently.

Self-Service (Knowledge Base): Sites must offer search engines that simultaneously provide both product search and inquiry search. Natural language processing of multipart inquiries is the ultimate service. If a site cannot offer this functionality, it must focus on efficient page layout and should have a site map.

Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP): VoIP opens up yet another channel of service to the customer. Providing the customer uses a computer equipped with speakers and a microphone, with a simple "click," the customer can speak live to an agent without using a telephone.

Environment: Contact numbers should be available and service support should be provided to the consumer during that country's time zone or the site should clearly state the hours of operation for each location. Otherwise, a delay in response time may be perceived by the customer as poor service.

Collaboration Assistance: Collaboration assistance/"call me" buttons, chat (instant messaging) and e-mail capabilities allow fast, personalized one-on-one interaction with the Help Desk, Government Department or Agency. Access to this functionality should be posted on each page of the site, when available. Professional, knowledgeable and courteous call centre (or e-mail contact) operators are a must; or responses may be delayed and service to the customer may be compromised. During unforeseen delays, customers should be notified immediately of the amount of time they will wait for a response.

E-Mail: Many times, customers wait days for responses to their e-mails or never receive a

reply back at all. Customers who call into a call centre do not wait three to five days for the representative to answer the phone or their questions; therefore, there is no reason the customer should endure this waiting time for a response to an inquiry sent through e-mail channels.

6.7.5 Customer Input

Users should be consulted to determine and monitor their:

- Attitudes towards online payments
- Priorities for online services, in particular bill payments
- Satisfaction with the entry point, and the service providers
- Security and privacy concerns

A segmentation study should also be conducted to build a profile of those who are the household bill payer, and those who are likely to be loyal to online methods, etc. This would enable communications to be tailored. Differences between metropolitan and regional bill payers should be profiled, along with differences in age groups and Internet access.

Multimedia Victoria should develop a marketing strategy for Victorian Government Online Services as a whole, and for any of the component strategies above which are adopted.

7 Evaluation

7.1 Proposed measures

CIRCIT (in collaboration with *Communications Innovations Ltd*) conducted work for *Multimedia Victoria* in 1998 that investigated usage measures that might be used as a reliable statistical base for measurement and analysis of the three core objectives of the *Victoria 21* policy:

- “1. Citizen, government and business applications of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and services in Victoria will surpass international bench-marks.
2. Wealth and jobs created by Victoria's information industries will demonstrate sustained growth.
- .3 Victoria is recognised as a centre of excellence in the

global information economy by 2001.”

One component of that research proposed measures to be used to monitor the uptake of government online services.

The study (*Victorian Multimedia and Information Industry Statistical Review Final Report*, Melbourne: CIRCIT, 1998) proposed the measurement of three indicators (**access**, **use** and **effective use**) from both **user and provider perspective**.

Table 7.1 below summarises the measures proposed. Explanations of some of the

categories in the proposed measurement scheme follow the table. For present purposes however:

System data: refers to data *Multimedia Victoria* should collect and monitor centrally;

Department data: refers to data that should be collected and maintained for every department and agency website

Survey data: refers to (as yet uncollected) data from a major quantitative study of use and non-use

Table 7.1: Measures of Use and Uptake of GOL Services

(Coloured text indicates how the data should be obtained)		
	User Perspective	Provider Perspective
Access	1. Volume [%, #] of users [type] who can physically access a GOLS (perhaps within x km thereof) by time period [type]. Survey data	2. Volume [%, #] of GOLS made available by time period [type] Departmental data 3. Number of public-access entry points (viz. <i>maxi</i> kiosks, library Internet terminals) and/or destination ports (viz. Web sites, IVR numbers). Departmental and system data
Use	4. Volume [%, #] of users [type] who have made an online request [type] by online delivery mode [type] by time period [type] Departmental, system & survey data 5. Volume [%, #] of online requests [type] made over delivery mode [type] by time [type] System data	6. Change in volume [%, #] of requests [type] fulfilled by online delivery mode [type] compared to all possible means of service delivery (conventional and online). Departmental and system data
Effective Use	7. Volume [type] of users [type] who gained satisfaction [type] with making an online request [type] via a given delivery mode [type]. Survey data	8. Growth over time period [type] in online requests [type] by delivery mode [type]. System data 9. Cost effectiveness of online delivery mode [type] compared to conventional (i.e. non-online) means. Departmental data

In this table:

users are unique individuals surveyed or identified by unique IP addresses in automated measures

types of users that might usefully be surveyed include people:

- of various ages
- of different genders
- living in various places
- using the Internet in different locations

types of delivery mode include:

- physical service
- telephone
- IVR
- E-mail
- Internet

types of online requests include

- Supplying new information
- Changing existing information held by an agency

Applying for products, services or permits

Booking an appointment

Ordering products or services

Paying for products or services, or penalties or bills

Searching a database

Monitoring progress

volume of online requests includes

- webpage "hits"
- webpage "errors"
- e-mails received

This framework, fully implemented, and supplemented by a **migration** indicator proposed below (to accommodate an evaluation of several of the strategies proposed and prioritised in this work) would seem comprehensive.

(Coloured text indicates how the data should be obtained)	User Perspective	Provider Perspective
Path Tracking	10. Services [type] users want to use online Survey data	13. Volume [%,#] of services [type] which provide migratory features [type] by time period [type] Departmental and system data
	11. Volume [%,#] of users [type] reporting sources [type] of information about and access to online sites identified as system sites*** Survey data	14. Volume [%,#] of requests for system sites*** by online source (URL) Departmental and system data
	12. Volume [type] of users [type] who gained satisfaction [type] with making an online request [type] via a given delivery mode [type] (include e-mail – cf. effective use above). Survey data	15. Volume [%,#] of URL links followed from system sites*** Departmental and system data 16. Number of e-mails received by content [type] Departmental data

*** Possible "**System**" sites are identified in Table 7.2 below. The proposal is that traffic to and from these sites should be reported centrally at an agreed frequency to evaluate the success or otherwise of strategies intended to maximise uptake of government services online.

The process of path tracking and mapping for usage should be iterative. So, while initial tracking from these sites should be used for benchmarking, dynamic promotion of sites having greater unique usage than those

proposed in web hierarchies.

This would involve the comparison of the **volume of users** data obtained from "system" sites with that obtained from departmental sources for other possible portals. Such alternative sites should replace "system" sites tracked if and when their usage is greater. Responsibility for reporting sites not included as system sites that surpass the usage of system sites would remain with departments and agencies.

Table 7.2: Key portal or transaction points to be considered as “System” sites:

1. Better Health Channel	http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/
2. Business Channel	http://www.business.channel.vic.gov.au/
3. Business Victoria	http://www.business.vic.gov.au/
4. Children’s Channel	
5. Citylink	http://www.transurban.com.au/
6. Consumer & Business Affairs	http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/
7. Education Channel	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/
8. Electoral Commission	http://www.vec.vic.gov.au/
9. Government Bookstore Online	http://www.bookshop.vic.gov.au
10. Government Directory	http://www.vic.gov.au/a_to_z.cfm or any <i>GOLD</i> type directory which replaces it
11. Information Victoria	http://www.information.vic.gov.au/
12. Jobs portal	
13. Legal channel	http://www.legalonline.vic.gov.au
14. Land Channel	http://www.land.vic.gov.au/
15. <i>maxi</i>	http://www.maxi.com.au
16. <i>Multi Service Express (ME)</i>	http://www.vic.gov.au/oneservices.cfm
17. Multimedia Victoria	http://www.mmv.vic.gov.au/
18. Museum	http://www.mov.vic.gov.au/
19. National Gallery of Victoria	http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/
20. NRE Payments	http://www.nre.vic.gov.au/cgi-bin/iip_payment_form.pl
21. Ombudsman	http://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/
22. Parks and Wildlife	http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/
23. Parliament	http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au
24. Skills.net	http://www.skills.net.au/
25. State Library	http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/
26. Tenders	http://www.tenders.vic.gov.au/
27. Tourism Channel	http://www.visitvictoria.com
28. <i>vic.gov.au</i>	http://www.vic.gov.au
29. <i>vic.gov.au</i> Contact Page	http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/domino/web_notes/comments.nsf
30. VicFarm	http://www.nre.vic.gov.au/web/root/domino/vicfarm/vicfarm.nsf/Main?OpenForm
31. Vicnet	http://www.vicnet.net.au/
32. VicRoads	http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/
33. Victorian Legislation	http://www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au/
34. Victrip	http://www.victrip.com.au/
35. Virtual Library	http://www.libraries.vic.gov.au/
36. VTAC (Uni Courses)	http://www.vtac.edu.au/search.html
37. Workcover	http://www.workcover.vic.gov.au/
38. Youth Channel	http://www.freeza.vic.gov.au/freeza
39. Zoo	http://www.zoo.org.au/

7.2 Departmental & System data

Systems are already in place to collect much of the departmental and system data mentioned above.

Multimedia Victoria should undertake an audit to ascertain what information

described in Measures 1 – 16 in Table 7.1 above is presently available, and negotiate protocols to ensure that the rest can be provided on a routine basis.

Measures 4 – 6 involve a special problem in relation to tracking bill payment transactions. Discussions with *Bpay*, the main online payment service provider for many of these transactions indicate that it is not possible to

provide data on their number centrally. This information is available to the individual billers through their financial institution. **There is an urgent need for *Multimedia Victoria* to develop protocols and systems for the collation of this information on a monthly basis if the success or otherwise of the “flooding” strategy is to be measured.**

Discussions throughout the project led to the conclusion that to date little work had been done, either within departments and agencies or on a whole of government basis, to establish the cost effectiveness of approaches to online service delivery (Measure 9).

Many major government online sites have been in operation for five years or more, and some sites that allow transactions have been in operation for 3 to 5 years. Many more transactional sites are proposed at present.

An audit of the benefit/cost ratios of online service provision should be undertaken across government.

Work has already begun on an internal, whole of government audit of the cost effectiveness of present initiatives, to learn from past experience, and to ensure best practice in further development. The results of any such audit should be widely disseminated among government departments and agencies to inform redesign and development of websites within the next year.

The advantages of external audit with publicly accessible results are manifest. It is a strong driver of standards development, and it ensures public trust in government online service delivery. Consideration should be given to such external auditing after the internal audit is completed.

The services of a commercial provider should be retained to enable the “traffic to” and “traffic from” data (proposed in Measures 14 & 15) to be collected. Although more expensive, this approach is favoured over “ratings survey” type approaches because of the problems implicit for them in sampling.

One common survey of this kind tracks 11,000 users nationally. Assuming that standard demographics are used to stratify the sample, one would expect this to involve about 2,750 users in Victoria. Assuming 10% usage of Victorian Government services online among users of the Internet, this would provide a sample size of less than 300 people, of whom, for example, fewer than 80 could be expected to be in regional or rural Victoria. Similarly, once the sample was analysed for age cohort or any category having more than 2 or 3 values, sub group data in the sample would lose salience, and in some cases reliability.

It seems to the present authors that user tracking at point of use is likely to provide better first level data which can be supplemented by survey data as described next.

7.3 Survey data

There is no way of understanding comprehensively the use and non-use of government services online without directly surveying individual users and non-users.

ABS figures, collected on a household basis, provide some idea of connectedness and use, but lack the capacity to plumb individual differences in use to the extent necessary for informed decision making by government and other private sector online service providers.

The identified problems with surveying relate to the reasonably consistent anecdotal evidence that perhaps only 10% of online users use government services. This may be reason for supplementing a more general survey of use and non-use with strata that represent users of these services self-selecting at point of use.

It is not just in Victoria that good quantitative data of this kind is lacking, nor is its lack a problem merely in the private sector. There is very little Australian quantitative data on individual use and non-use.

***Multimedia Victoria* should participate in (and coordinate if necessary) a major quantitative study on use and non-use of online services.**

7.4 Resourcing

7.4.1.1 System and departmental data	Audit of existing information collection: MMV internal resources Tracking: Tracking 40 proposed sites (@ \$375/month) OR "Ratings" method	\$180,000 p.a. \$90,000 p.a.
7.4.1.2 Survey data	Participation in (and, if necessary, coordination of) a major quantitative study (Victorian or national) of online service use and non-use. Depending on the scope of the study and the level of participation, estimated to cost:	\$50,000 - \$250,000

Appendices

Appendix 1: Proposed activities likely to encourage uptake suggested in consultation

EFFECTIVE USE PRINCIPLE (in priority order)	PEOPLE AND AGENCIES PROVIDING “CONVERGENT” GOVERNMENT SERVICES			
	“PUBLIC SERVANTS ”	“AGENTS”	“GATEKEEPERS”	“INTEGRATED SERVICES”
1. RELEVANCE TO DAILY ACTIVITIES	Provide a variety of modes of transaction Provide directories of cross gvt services online, enable searching for services by area/ locality Integrate local and state government services (eg rates, licences & utilities) by committing a wide range of agencies	Make specific transactions discoverable, then give users options Create consumer advisory groups for useability testing/ user-centric design 24 hour access Investigate co-channelling with other governments, communities online, utilities & business, subject to effect on branded space flood transaction types, audience segments, life events	Prioritise and promote valuable transactions – government service is not just information viewing. Use service modeller data to measure value of transactions to both users and government Create consumer advisory groups to advise gatekeepers of concerns (along the lines of ME workshops run by sausage with peak bodies pre-design of site) Also use dynamic feedback from search data to inform government of most accessed/relevant services Provide as a transaction, opportunities for citizens to become involved in online democracy (see the Canadian experience, talkingpoint.sa.gov.au,)	Provide a 24 hour capability for all financial services Co-channelling with other governments, communities online, utilities & business Provide one-stop capability to suit a wide range of transactions and information types
2. LOCATION OF ACCESS POINTS	Provide information about online services in appropriate physical locations (eg better health channel terminals in community health centres – could go further with this by providing access to other channels at the same time) Provision of skilled, multi-lingual assistance in targeted locations	Ensure that the government online portals are easy to locate (cf. URL promotion) Consistency of addresses across all government channels to allow intuitive navigation (business channel versus betterhealth) Recognise that access to online services is still dependent upon access in general population (see ABS statistics, Telstra survey)	Continue marketing public access points through i@ promotion Choose access points according to population, demographics Capitalise on growing PC ownership as providing alternative points of access –acknowledge the potential future audience for interactive television	Place services in central locations or in relevant existing locations (eg post office, health centre, local council) Ensure proximity to transport & other govt. services (see AUSTOUCH experience in ACT) Explore alternatives to kiosks, or refocus kiosk services towards the most used transactions

<p>3. EASE OF USE</p>	<p>Clearly identify e-mail contact address on front pages of govt. websites Introduce integrated e-mail/fax service for businesses accessing govt. info via fax Ensure public service staff possess the necessary 'mass listening' skills & competencies to effectively deliver services across different channels</p>	<p>Develop more effective search engines to facilitate greater ease of use Support people with disabilities via speech recognition & other software Provide option of text-only sites as standard feature Provide help features both online (eg, e-mail query) and offline via a phone help-desk or call centre</p>	<p>Monitor and evaluate adherence to W3C guidelines on web page useability & functionality Ensure web pages feature simple layout & language, intuitive navigation Group transactions according to those most commonly used Use data from dynamic feedback to redesign vic.gov.au to demonstrate govt. commitment to these standards review portals & develop easy-to-follow hierarchy structures</p>	<p>Make use of existing human resources while providing option of self-service Provide a choice of channels through one operator/ interaction Provide integrated desktop systems for operators Target different consumer groups – ie, non-users, repeated users, discontinued users – and different market segments (Jackie's data breakdowns)</p>
<p>4. TRUST</p>	<p>Maintain confidence in existing services while also promoting migration Capitalise on existing public trust in government services</p>	<p>Guarantee secure servers for financial transactions with government Introduce a reasonable standard of encryption for all business/financial transactions Enable consumers to utilise personal cookies to customise access Inform users of privacy considerations, emphasis on opt-in information provision services</p>	<p>Promote branded space by way of URL displayed in all govt. promotional materials Commit to a single entry point/portal site Assign responsibility for site maintenance Develop and continuously evaluate reporting structure for reliability Provide opportunities for feedback via online surveys of satisfaction Develop standards for authentication & receipt across departments, agencies, local councils</p>	<p>Develop privacy policies for receipt/ transmission of personal info. via e-mail and/or web Provide receipt for all transactions Consider appointing an ombudsman to oversee and respond to consumer concerns about service</p>
<p>5. CHOICE OF CHANNEL</p>	<p>Guarantee that consumers who communicate via offline channels (f2f, phone, post, fax) receive the same service as online customers</p>	<p>Provide consistent service across all online channels (ie, MAXI, e-mail, web) by allowing users to conduct similar transactions via different channels (eg, business channel potential for link and return, completing a variety of transactions at linked sites and return to the govt. site) Encourage greater uptake amongst different user groups by exploring the future possibility of access through other devices (eg, WAP, interactive TV, Palm Pilot)</p>	<p>Ensure that relevant and high volume info. available offline is also available online, in an accurate and updated format</p>	<p>Provide operators with access to all channels Use current f2f interactions to encourage migration to online services (see Singapore 1 experience) Target services on the basis of convenience – for example, providing a fast DIY service for bill payments during lunch hours</p>

<p>6. INCENTIVES</p>	<p>Institute govt. wide guarantee of reply to e-mail within x days Institute penalties for late replies Maintain general principles of best-practice customer service</p>	<p>Encourage view that short term costs will be outweighed by long term benefits (not all of which are necessarily quantifiable) Emphasis on meeting peoples' changing expectations</p>	<p>Emphasise customized (ie, consumer-controlled) web pages rather than personalized (ie, government-controlled) content Provide other info. upon request to add value to govt. info. (eg, tattsлото, weather, sport results)</p>	<p>Explore costings of differential pricing strategies Offer some form of discount as a means of increasing uptake (see New Brunswick, Service Tasmania)</p>
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Appendix 6: Current online and epayment status of Victorian LGAs

Local Government Authority	Yes	Comments	No
1. Alpine Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
2. Ararat Rural City Council		Functional website	✗
3. Ballarat City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
4. Banyule City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
5. Bass Coast Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
6. Baw Baw Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
7. Bayside City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
8. Boroondara City Council	✓ (via Bpay)	Postbillpay as well	
9. Brimbank City Council	✓ (via maxi)		
10. Buloke Shire Council		No website	✗
11. Campaspe Shire Council	✓	Link from homepage	
12. Cardinia Shire Council		Has functional website	✗
13. Casey City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
14. Central Goldfields Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
15. Colac-Otway Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
16. Corangamite Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)	Under construction	
17. Darebin City Council	✓ (via maxi)		
18. Delatite Shire Council	✓ (via maxi)		
19. East Gippsland Shire Council	✓	Penalties etc as well from front page	
20. Frankston City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
21. Gannawarra Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
22. Glen Eira City Council		Has functional website	✗

23. Glenelg Shire Council		Single static contact page	✗
24. Golden Plains Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
25. Greater Bendigo City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
26. Greater Dandenong City Council	✓	Penalties etc as well from front page	
27. Greater Geelong City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
28. Greater Shepparton City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
29. Hepburn Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)	Under construction	
30. Hindmarsh Shire Council		Has functional website	✗
31. Hobsons Bay City Council	✓ (via maxi)	Rates only, small link from frontpage	
32. Horsham Rural City Council		Site under construction	✗
33. Hume City Council		Has functional website	✗
34. Indigo Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
35. Kingston City Council	✓ (via Bpay)	IVR possible thru Cardpay	
36. Knox City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
37. Latrobe City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
38. Loddon Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
39. Macedon Ranges Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
40. Manningham City Council	✓ (via maxi)	Link on front page hidden & unexplained	
41. Maribyrnong City Council		Library only has a homepage	✗
42. Maroondah City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
43. Melbourne City Council	✓ (via maxi)	Penalties too, deep in page structure	
44. Melton Shire Council	✓	Reg. & penalties as well. Clear link from homepage	
45. Mildura Rural City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		

46. Mitchell Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
47. Moira Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
48. Monash City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
49. Moonee Valley City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
50. Moorabool Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
51. Moreland City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
52. Mornington Peninsula Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
53. Mount Alexander Shire Council		Has functional website	✗
54. Moyne Shire Council		Has functional website	✗
55. Murrindindi Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)	Under construction	
56. Nillumbik Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
57. Northern Grampians Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
58. Port Phillip City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
59. Pyrenees Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
60. Borough of Queenscliffe	✓ (via Bpay)		
61. South Gippsland Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
62. Southern Grampians Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
63. Stonnington City Council		Has functional website	✗
64. Strathbogie Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
65. Surf Coast Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
66. Swan Hill Rural City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
67. Towong Shire Council		4 page static site	✗
68. Wangaratta Rural City Council	✓ (via DEFT via Bpay)		
69. Warrnambool City Council		Has functional website, Bpay by phone	✗

70. Wellington Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
71. West Wimmera Shire Council		Has functional website	✗
72. Whitehorse City Council	✓ (via maxi)		
73. Whittlesea City Council	✓	Link from homepage	
74. Wodonga Rural City Council		Has functional website	✗
75. Wyndham City Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
76. Yarra City Council	✓ (via Bpay)	Parking INs by maxi	
77. Yarra Ranges Shire Council	✓ (via Bpay)		
78. Yarriambiack Shire Council		Under construction	✗

Appendix 7: Current online and epayment status of Victorian energy and water utilities

Utility	Yes	No
<u>Electricity</u>		
AGL	✓ (via Bpay)	
Citipower	✓ (via Bpay)	
TXU (Eastern Energy)	✓ (by maxi)	
Powercor	✓ (via Bpay)	
United Energy	✓	
<u>Gas</u>		
Origin Energy	✓ (via Bpay)	
TXU (Kinetic)	✓ (via Bpay)	
Pulse (Ikon)	✓	
<u>Water</u>		
Barwon Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
Central Highlands Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
City West Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
Coliban Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
East Gippsland Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
Gippsland Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
Gippsland and Southern Rural Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
Glenelg Region Water		x
Goulburn Valley Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
Goulburn-Murray Rural Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
Grampians Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
Lower Murray Water	✓	
North East Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
Portland Coast Water	✓ (via Bpay)	

South East Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
South Gippsland Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
South West Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
Sunraysia Rural Water		✗
Yarra Valley Water	✓	
Western Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
Westernport Water	✓ (via Bpay)	
Wimmera Mallee (Rural) Water	✓ (via Bpay)	

Appendix 8: Proposed consistent email addresses and URLs

Department or Agency	Present address	Proposed address
Arts Victoria	arts.vic.gov.au	arts.vic.gov.au
Auditor-General	audit.vic.gov.au	auditor.vic.gov.au
Barwon Water Authority	barwonwater.vic.gov.au	barwon.water.vic.gov.au
Better Health Channel	betterhealth.vic.gov.au	better.health.vic.gov.au
Building Control Commission	buildcc.com.au	building.control.vic.gov.au
Business Channel	business.channel.vic.gov.au	business.channel.vic.gov.au
Business Victoria	business.vic.gov.au	business.vic.gov.au
Casino and Gambling Authority	vcga.vic.gov.au	casino.gambling.vic.gov.au
Chief Parliamentary Counsel	ocpc.vic.gov.au	parliament.vic.gov.au
Cinemedia	cinemedia.net	cinemedia.vic.gov.au
City West Water	citywestwater.com.au	citywest.water.vic.gov.au
Coliban Water	coliban.vic.gov.au	coliban.water.vic.gov.au
Consumer & Business Affairs	consumer.vic.gov.au	consumer.vic.gov.au
Country Fire Authority	cfa.vic.gov.au	cfa.vic.gov.au
County Court	countycourt.vic.gov.au	county.court.vic.gov.au
Docklands Authority	docklands.vic.gov.au	docklands.vic.gov.au
Domestic Building Tribunal	vcat.vic.gov.au	tribunal.vic.gov.au
EcoRecycle Victoria	ecorecycle.vic.gov.au	ecorecycle.vic.gov.au
Education Channel	education.vic.gov.au	education.channel.vic.gov.au
Education, Emplt and Training	edumail.vic.gov.au (mail) eduvic.vic.gov.au (web)	education.vic.gov.au
Environ Protection Authority	epa.vic.gov.au	epa.vic.gov.au
Equal Opportunity Commission	eoc.vic.gov.au	equal.opportunity.vic.gov.au
Food Victoria	food.vic.gov.au	food.vic.gov.au
Goulburn Valley Water	gvwater.vic.gov.au	goulburn.valley.water.vic.gov.au
Government Bookshop	bookshop.vic.gov.au	bookshop.vic.gov.au
Government Purchasing Board	vgpb.vic.gov.au	purchasing.vic.gov.au
Governor of Victoria	governor.vic.gov.au	governor.vic.gov.au
Heritage Victoria	heritage.vic.gov.au	heritage.vic.gov.au
Human Services	dhs.vic.gov.au	human.services.vic.gov.au
Industrial Relations	dsd.vic.gov.au	industrial.relations.vic.gov.au
Information Victoria	information.vic.gov.au	information.vic.gov.au
Infrastructure	doi.vic.gov.au	infrastructure.vic.gov.au
Justice	justice.vic.gov.au	justice.vic.gov.au
Legal channel		justice.channel.vic.gov.au
Land Channel	land.vic.gov.au	land.channel.vic.gov.au
Magistrate's Court	magistratescourt.vic.gov.au	magistrates.court.vic.gov.au
Melbourne Water	melbwater.com.au	melbourne.water.vic.gov.au
Multimedia Victoria	mmv.vic.gov.au	multimedia.vic.gov.au
Museum Victoria	mov.vic.gov.au	museum.vic.gov.au
National Gallery of Victoria	ngv.vic.gov.au	gallery.vic.gov.au
Natural Res & Environment	nre.vic.gov.au	environment.vic.gov.au and natural.resources.vic.gov.au
Office for Youth	edumail.vic.gov.au (mail) freeza.vic.gov.au (web)	freeza.vic.gov.au and youth.vic.gov.au
Office of Women's Policy	women.vic.gov.au	women.vic.gov.au
Ombudsman	ombudsman.vic.gov.au	ombudsman.vic.gov.au
Parks Victoria	parks.vic.gov.au	parks.vic.gov.au
Parliament of Victoria	parliament.vic.gov.au	parliament.vic.gov.au
Premier and Cabinet	dpc.vic.gov.au	premier.vic.gov.au
Public Records Office	prov.vic.gov.au	records.vic.gov.au
Regulator General	reggen.vic.gov.au	regulator.vic.gov.au
Small Business Victoria	sbv.vic.gov.au	business.vic.gov.au

South East Water	sewl.com.au	south.east.water.vic.gov.au
South West Water	swwa.com.au	south.west.water.vic.gov.au
Sport and Recreation Victoria	sport.vic.gov.au	sport.vic.gov.au
State and Reg Development	dsd.vic.gov.au	state.development.vic.gov.au and development.vic.gov.au
State Emergency Service	ses.vic.gov.au	ses.vic.gov.au
State Library of Victoria	slv.vic.gov.au	library.vic.gov.au
State Revenue Office	sro.dtf.vic.gov.au	treasury.vic.gov.au
Sunraysia Rural Water Authority	srwa.org.au	sunraysia.water.vic.gov.au
Supreme Court of Victoria	supremecourt.vic.gov.au	supreme.court.vic.gov.au
Sustainable Energy Authority	sea.vic.gov.au	sustainable.energy.vic.gov.au
Tourism Channel	visitvictoria.com	visitvictoria.com
Tourism Victoria	tourismvictoria.com.au	tourism.vic.gov.au
Training and Further Education	otfe.vic.gov.au	tafe.vic.gov.au
Treasury and Finance	dtf.vic.gov.au	treasury.vic.gov.au
Urban Land Authority	ula.vic.gov.au	urban.land.vic.gov.au
Vic Multicultural Commission	multicultural.vic.gov.au	multicultural.vic.gov.au
Vic Roads	roads.vic.gov.au	vicroads.vic.gov.au
VicHealth	vichealth.vic.gov.au	vichealth.vic.gov.au
Victoria Legal Aid	vla.vic.gov.au	legal.aid.vic.gov.au
Victoria Police	police.vic.gov.au	police.vic.gov.au
Victorian Arts Centre	artscentre.net.au	arts.centre.vic.gov.au
Victorian Board of Studies	bos.vic.edu.au	education.vic.gov.au
Victorian Channels Authority	vicchannels.vic.gov.au	channels.vic.gov.au
Victorian WorkCover Authority	workcover.vic.gov.au	workcover.vic.gov.au
Western Water	westernwater.vic.gov.au	western.water.vic.gov.au
Yarra Valley Water	yvw.com.au	yarra.valley.water.vic.gov.au
Zoological Parks & Gardens Board of Victoria	zoo.org.au	zoo.vic.gov.au

Appendix 9: Summary of Specific Recommendations

Activities identified in the consultation process, by applying principles of effective use from a user perspective to areas of government service delivery, were grouped into strategies. The Steering Committee prioritised them in terms of their likely impact:

9.1 Maximum Impact Strategies

The strategies considered to have the greatest potential for maximising uptake were:

- **Developing a system of one-stop-shops for integrated service delivery;**
- **Creating a central portal for government services online;**
- **Establishing e-mail as a third way of communicating with government;**
- **Developing a whole-of-government approach to marketing online services; and**
- **Developing a Children's Channel.**

It is noted that significant work has already been done within government to achieve the first two of these strategies. The specific recommendations from this consultation with respect to the final three strategies are as follows:

9.1.1 Establishing e-mail as a third way of communicating with government

1. **The *Victorian Government* should revise and adopt a standard addressing format for e-mail in Victorian government departments and agencies according to suggested principles (p.24).**
2. **A comprehensive online directory of Victorian government departments, agencies, services and staff should be developed.**
3. **Existing policies for use of e-mail by Victorian Public Service officers should be clearly promulgated, and applied consistently to all communications with external parties.**
4. **Responsibility for e-mail policy dissemination should be located within an appropriate area of each department (cf. also #30 below).**
5. **Contact officers' e-mail addresses should be available on every department or agency webpage.**
6. **A government-wide standard for response time to e-mail should be instituted. "2 working days" is suggested to ensure e-mail is speedier than post and comparable to telephone contact.**
7. **An evaluation of penalties for late reply to e-mail should be conducted with agencies or utilities that have already implemented such schemes.**
8. **The capacity for delivering automatic receipts to e-mail should also be provided in all department and agency e-mail software.**
9. **Appropriate security requirements for e-mail services should be adopted in accordance with existing IT policies.**
10. **Virus protection software should be implemented across government.**
11. **People sending material to government departments and agencies which contains viruses should have e-mails returned with notification of problematic contents, and some advice on how to correct the problem.**
12. **Encryption of a standard appropriate to the purpose should be made available to end-users at the point of the transaction.**
13. **Privacy policies should be formulated based on existing legislation, CLEARLY PUBLICISED and include clear methods of enforcement of policies and prescribed penalties for breach of those obligations.**
14. **Certificates should be accepted only from service providers that have undergone some form of evaluation acceptable to the Government.**
15. **Access to the sources of acceptable certificates should be provided at the point of transaction.**
16. **The *Victorian Government* should initiate a seminar program to facilitate workgroup discussion of effective e-mail use throughout the public sector.**
17. **The *Victorian Government* should make available to departmental and agency management details of training packages which are available to address individual staff competencies.**

9.1.2 Marketing

18. **Multimedia Victoria** should develop a marketing strategy for Victorian Government Online Services as a whole, and for any of the component strategies above which are adopted.

9.1.3 Developing a Children's Channel

19. The **Victorian Government** should seek to form a partnership with a private provider or consortium to develop a high quality VicKids' Channel, a valuable resource in its own right to provide school project relevant information to 6 to 12 year olds.
20. It should also be used to point to transactions that school aged children can tell their parents and others that it is possible to do online.

9.2 High Impact Strategies

The strategies considered to have a high potential for maximising uptake were:

- **Providing consistency of addressing and directories;**
- **Flooding specific transaction types;**
- **Establishing interactivity by way of online forums;**
- **Engineering understandings of usage into the website development process;**
- **Selecting a smarter whole-of-government search engine; and**
- **Providing users with the option of customising their web pages.**

The consistency issue is addressed in the e-mail strategy; software has already been purchased to trial online forums; and, work on a better search engine is already underway.

Flooding by transaction type, engineering-in understandings of usage and customisation software were considered to be the three strategies most worthy of documentation. Specific recommendations with regards these strategies are outlined below:

9.2.1 Flooding high frequency transactions

21. The strategy involves "flooding" a relevant transaction type by having **ALL** the following bill payments available online:
 - **Local government rate, registration and penalty payments**
 - **VicRoads vehicle registration payments**
 - **Water, electricity and gas account payments**
 - **Civic Compliance Victoria penalty payments**
22. A target of July 2001 should be set in collaboration with the Municipal Association of Victoria for achieving this with the 17 Local government Authorities still to develop websites or provide online payment facilities.
23. Similarly, collaborative work should begin with the 2 water authorities as yet not providing online payment facilities with the same target date.
24. **Multiservice Express (ME)** should be redesigned to take advantage of this flooding. **ME** should be included as a "web object" (or a link taking the user out of but not away from the host site) on each of those e-payment sites it identifies and on key government websites.

9.2.2 "Engineering in" Understandings of Usage and Service Standards

25. Government departments and agencies should adopt as a principle of design that all relevant transactions are accessible from their website's frontpage.
26. All government departments and agencies should immediately audit their websites for compliance with W3C Accessibility Guidelines and continue the process of conforming with accessibility provisions. New sites should be built to conform.
27. A whole of government policy should be adopted ensuring that every government department or agency with a website has a user advisory structure in place.
28. All government websites should have a clear point of contact for users wanting to comment on the structure and functionality of the site. Sites should make it clear that such feedback is valued.
29. **Multimedia Victoria** should instigate working groups that incorporate input from potential users on government service delivery on WAP and Digital TV.

30. There should be a whole of government policy that building highest quality government online services requires input from service delivery and communications staff in organisations, as well as from IT staff.
31. Government Departments and agencies should develop protocols for dealing with complaints about online service delivery similar to those used for complaints generally.
32. Government officers dealing with complaints about online service delivery should make users aware of the recourse they have to the Ombudsman if unsatisfied with the way their complaint is treated.

9.2.3 Customisation

33. *Multimedia Victoria* should work with a department (e.g. the *Department of Premier and Cabinet* in relation to vic.gov.au) or a channel (e.g. the Business Channel) to pilot customisation software.

9.3 Moderate Impact Strategies

The strategies considered to have moderate potential for maximising uptake were:

- **Developing service standards; and**
- **Cross-promotion of government online services.**

The service standard strategy has been incorporated into the e-mail and the user focussed design strategies. Cross-promotion has been incorporated into the overall marketing strategy.

9.4 Miscellaneous

In the course of the stakeholder consultations, and during internal workshopping at CIRCIT, three ideas emerged which seemed to merit documentation for further consideration, although they were not prioritized by the Steering Committee:

9.4.1 A Training and Induction CD on GOL for Public Sector Staff

34. *Multimedia Victoria* working with the *Department of Premier and Cabinet* should fund and coordinate the development of an induction and training CD on Victorian Government services online for distribution to all Victorian Government staff.

9.4.2 A "Jobs Channel"

35. *Multimedia Victoria* should work with the *Office of Public Employment* to either develop a channel which gives prospective employees up to date information on Victorian Public Service job vacancies and ready means for applying for jobs online, or to make outsourcing arrangements so that all government job vacancies are easily accessible online as with government tenders.

9.4.3 A "Bookstore Channel"

36. *Multimedia Victoria* should initiate a working party with *Information Victoria* to investigate the plausibility and cost of substantially expanding the operations of the online service, www.bookstore.vic.gov.au, to include ALL Victorian Government department and agency publications.

9.5 Evaluation

The project brief also called for an evaluative framework to be developed. The main recommendations are:

37. *Multimedia Victoria* should conduct an audit against the proposed measurement framework (Table 7.1, pp.37&38) of what information is presently available at system and department level for monitoring GOL service delivery.
38. *Multimedia Victoria* should develop protocols and systems for the collation of information about relevant *Bpay* transactions on a monthly basis if the success or otherwise of the "flooding" strategy is to be measured.
39. An audit of the benefit/cost ratios of online service provision should be undertaken across government.
40. The services of a commercial provider should be retained to enable the "traffic to" and "traffic from" data for key government online sites to be tracked.

41. *Multimedia Victoria* should participate in (and coordinate if necessary) a major quantitative study on use and non-use of online services.