

Organisational Management Strategies in the Department of Transport and Main Roads

Element 1: Internal Organisation Dynamics

1.3 Organisational Structures

The Queensland Government's Department of Transport and Main Roads has a complex portfolio, including responsibility for road infrastructure, land and marine transport, driver and vehicle licensing, rollingstock and rail ticketing and innovation in our transport networks, which has driven the organisation's structure. The department comprises five divisions which are:

- Customer Services, Safety and Regulation
- Infrastructure Management and Delivery
- Policy Planning and Investment
- TransLink
- Corporate

In addition, there are three other direct reports to the Director-General who deal with special areas of focus: Accessible Transport Networks, Mobility as a Service and Transport Network Security and Resilience.

From a state government perspective, the department is relatively untouched in recent times by machinery of government changes with more recent additions to the its structure being related to project requirements for innovations in transport, such as automated vehicles and the addition of new rollingstock and state of the art signalling on Queensland's passenger rail network.

Due to differences in the nature of each of the divisions, despite the interconnectivity of some areas of responsibility across the department, each division has developed its own very different culture which has impacted on internal dynamics. Each division takes a very different approach in meeting its objectives and in many cases, the only common ground, as in many organisations, is in the Corporate division.

Whilst Corporate division developed a "centre led, locally delivered" model for supporting its internal customers, some areas such as Infrastructure Management and Delivery in particular have operated as a discrete business area with less reliance on corporate policy and processes. This is particularly evident in their approach to procurement as they have developed their own processes, tendering and contract documentation. This is a hybrid version of the State Government's Capital Works Management Framework documentation and bespoke contracts specifically written for road infrastructure delivery. This approach has been, and continues to be, a source of friction between the two divisions.

The "centre led, locally delivered" model was developed out of the need to manage the delivery of the department's objective of delivering a connected transport network for all Queenslanders across metropolitan and rural and regional areas. It has enabled Customer Service Centres, who deliver face to face services to meet public needs, to be largely responsible for administering their own corporate function whilst being governed by departmental policies.

Similarly, the size of road infrastructure projects which span regional areas of Queensland and which can take years to deliver, need to be managed on the ground with site offices moving along with construction progress. This type of project does not lend itself to micromanagement and cannot be completed without input from more than one branch of the department due to the complexity of planning, construction, power and site services, and contracting for heavy equipment which will be retained over the large distances involved.

The department is larger than many other state government departments in Queensland and the organisation structure reflects the particular needs of managing a large, diverse organisation successfully. Without decentralisation of functions and delegations the department would be unable to maintain operations on a day-to-day basis due to the vast number of transactions involved. It would also be unable to meet the requirements for delivering services to its customers across Queensland.

Element 2: External Organisation Dynamics

2.7 Marketing

As a part of state government, the Department of Transport and Main Roads does not take the same competitive approach to marketing that private sector organisations would use due to the difference in its objectives. It does however still market its brand through a number of different mediums.

Although the department's marketing function is not driven by the need for sales to ensure profitability is maintained, it still has drivers which inform its marketing needs and choices. This is primarily to advise, inform and support Queenslanders and is aimed at ensuring vital messaging gets out to the communities it serves.

Marketing can take the form of television advertising campaigns which are particularly geared to ensuring more immediate messages reach people quickly. The wide reach and visual impact of television ad campaigns will far outweigh the higher cost of marketing through this medium and have the additional benefit of reaching the in-home audience.

This has been evident from campaigns such as the "If it's flooded, forget it" message which aims to deter drivers from driving through flood waters which can prove to be fatal and is also seen in the current campaign to prevent drink driving.

As the owner of a number of relatively new trains, the department also takes up the opportunity to use its rail services to advertise services or get safety messages across to customers during their journey. New trains provide out of home advertising options which are not limited to static signage. Video portals strategically place on rollingstock run messages on a loop and cover content from the department and other state government departments. Train wraps can also be used for effective, colourful and eye-catching advertising on the exterior of trains providing visual stimuli and which utilises a greater surface area than those available on buses.

In addition, the department is able to capitalise on its road corridors to provide static and digital signage opportunities. These can be leased from the department by other organisations to market their own company or products. There are a number of companies which lease concessions for signs across Queensland, with some locations, such as near to Brisbane Airport or those on the M1 c

In order to further market its brand, particularly to mobile and technologically savvy customers, the department has also launched a number of online apps to reach out to customers and provide services through the internet. These apps are tools and include the TransLink app which gives customers access to current information on public transport with real time updates on services, timetables and journey planners, and fare information.

Other apps provide access to services such checking your car registration information and status, checking real time traffic information to plan your car journey, an online learner driver logbook and a trial of digital licensing which commenced trials in October 2020.

While conversion to sales from advertising and brand loyalty are not primary concerns for the department as users do not have an alternative option to some state-run services, providing access to these services in this way aligns with many of our customers' preferences for accessing tools and information, improves the customer experience and enhances service delivery.

Element 3: People Management

3.6 Training and Development

The Department of Transport and Main Roads is committed to providing training and development opportunities to staff to facilitate growth and upskilling of its workforce. Within some of the different divisions across the department there are some dedicated units which focus on identifying relevant training and ensuring access to staff to build their skills and keep their knowledge current.

This includes the department's Project Management Improvement unit which delivers an annual training program to staff across the state in project-relevant topics including Project Management, Contract Management, Estimating and Scheduling. This program is scheduled at the start of each calendar year and is available to departmental staff in all parts of Queensland who are involved in the delivery of projects. This training is funded by the attendee's business area using their allocated training budget. Information on available courses through this unit is sent out to all staff through the department's daily message service.

In the department's Corporate division, the Chief Procurement Office has a Capability team which is responsible for identifying learning and development opportunities for staff involved in procurement and contract management as part of their role. In addition to managing training for Chief Procurement Office staff, the team is also responsible for managing mandatory training for procurement delegates. Mandated training must be completed before a procurement delegate can exercise their delegation. This is facilitated through online modules through the department's Accelerate LMS portal which also monitors course completion. The Capability team reaches potential training course candidates primarily through Yammer and their Communities of Practice for Procurement and Contract Management.

The department is very proactive in its approach to training and development believing that capability uplift is fundamental to ensuring staff are best placed to be productive when they have access to current thinking on topics relevant to their role. This approach also provides empowerment to staff, enabling them to make decisions within the remit of their role and within departmental policy and procedures. It also ensures that staff are sufficiently motivated and are able to take advantage of opportunities for career progression which frequently arise within such a large organisation.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on training and development has been to make more training available to staff. Face to face training ceased for a period, however there have been many more opportunities to undertake online training and attend webinars through a variety of organisations and industry bodies. Much of this online content has been free and staff have been encouraged to take up relevant training where workloads allow. This has led to an upsurge in current knowledge and enhancement of transferrable skills which also aids staff who wish to take up short term relieving opportunities in other areas of the department.

The department has also introduced LinkedIn Learning to provide a free online source of information and short courses on a diverse range of subjects. This supplements the mentoring, leadership training course and Future Leaders Group (currently running in our Finance and Procurement branch).

The investment in people demonstrated by the department has positively impacted staff retention, job satisfaction, as demonstrated through the annual staff survey results, and morale in the department. This is reflected in the levels of service delivered to our external customers.

Element 4: Business Planning

4.2 Types of Business

In my current role as a Senior Procurement Advisor in the Department of Transport and Main Roads, I need to have a sound understanding of the types of businesses who may submit an offer against a tender I have put out to market. The supplier's type of business can have an impact on contract risk should that supplier be awarded a contract.

The most common types of business structure in Australia are:

- Sole trader
- Partnership
- Company
- Trust

It is not unknown however to find co-operatives and incorporated associations, but it is unlikely that the department would engage these types of business to provide services.

In addition to understanding the type of business I may contract with it is also very important to understand some of the business relationships and responsibilities of the suppliers to ensure that the person signing as the supplier is able to contract on behalf of that organisation.

Sole traders are usually self-funded and are responsible for all decisions made in the business and are personally liable for any claims. In my role I contract less commonly with sole traders than with other types of business. Although sole traders may employ staff, there is a greater risk with this type of supplier than some others due to reliance mainly on one person. This can present a contract risk around fulfilling the contract if capacity to deliver is diminished through illness or injury.

Partnerships and proprietary companies in Australia make up the largest number of organisations the department usually contracts with, although if trading with overseas suppliers, public limited companies may be a consideration. Partnerships comprise several people (two or more) who are operating a business together with all partners having unlimited personal liability for debts. Due to the spread of liability, this present less of a risk than engaging a sole trader. It is a common business type for experts offering professional services and many partnerships are engaged across state government departments.

When engaging a company (Pty Ltd), procurement and contract management staff need to be aware that a company is a separate legal entity which can incur debts and can sue and be sued. Unlike a partnership, company shareholders can limit their personal liability and are not responsible for debts accrued by the company.

Contracting with a trust is more common than may be expected and carries some risks which are particular to this type of business structure. Past experience in undertaking significant procurements for the department has taught me that the business relationships of some trusts can be complex with more than one trust banding together under a single trading name, while each trust would have a trustee who carries out the business on behalf of the trust members. When planning to go out to market, it is wise to allow for this type of business submitting an offer. The department has built specific questions into its Invitation to Offer templates to ensure that the name and address of the responsible person who is able to contract, and therefore legally liable for the debts of the trust.

It is therefore a vital part of the tender process to assess the contract risk at the planning stage and ensure that any insurance requirements will cover any possible eventuality should there be issues of a legal nature during the life of the contract. It is also strongly advised that procurement staff examine supplier business structures carefully to ensure the person they are contracting with is eligible to do so under law.