Gavin Slater: With headlines like DTA: All Bark and No Bite, How Not To Be A GMO 2.0, DTA Grilling, Exodus of Talent, Tech Screw Ups, Bridges Burnt and Goodwill Diminished, you might wonder why I actually took on this role, and was I of sound mind and body. It all started, really, I think probably about eight months ago, with a conversation with Martin, we were introduced and it was just a casual chat, nothing more. It was a great opportunity. Martin shared with me the government's ambitions, and what government is seeking to achieve, particularly across three core areas.

Which is one, how do we continue to drive a transformation programme that encourages and enables, actually, individuals and businesses to do more digitally? To do more online. Secondly, in doing that how do we significantly improve the experience for individuals and businesses when dealing with government. And thirdly, and just as importantly, how do we make sure taxpayers get better bang for buck? The significant amount of money that we spend on their behalf on ICT and related programmes.

Three really compelling ambitions and three that made infinite sense to me. Not too dissimilar to what I faced in the private sector leading NAB's retail bank. At the end of the day, we knew that our customers had to buy us for digital, they wanted to be empowered, they wanted to deal with us whenever and however and wherever they chose. They wanted most things a buyer's for [inaudible 00:01:42]. So there was a whole orientation and it continues to be that for the whole sector. They wanted a better outcome, a better experience, as measured by advocacy. At the same time, our investors, who subjected us to a significant amount of scrutiny being a public company, wanted to ensure that they were getting the right return for the investment they were putting into the company. So a lot of similarities there.

I think what I liked about those ambitions is they are bipartisan in a world where everything is so political, as I'm learning. I'd like to think any government of the day would have these ambitions. They're really important ambitions, acting in the interests of citizens, taxpayers, individuals and businesses.

As I went through the interview panel, I must Rosemary Huxtable and Katherine Campbell, Nerida, and John Lloyd also played a critical role in convincing me to come on. One of the questions I asked of them through the interview process was, "Do you see the need for the DTA? On the basis of everything I'd read and heard, do you think it is critical? Am I signing after to something worthwhile?" They were unequivocal and deep in their conviction around the need for an agency to work effectively and constructively across what is a very decentralised environment called the public service. That was it for me. Really, I got hooked after that and literally couldn't wait to start.

My first three months, it has been all about learning, and it's one of the invigorating things. When you spend 30 years in one sector and that's all you know, you know the players, you know the known unknowns, the said unsaids, the operating rhythm, to come into a new city and new environment and new people, I found that learning invigorating, if not painful at times.

For those that saw my senate estimates performance, I now know that there's certain dinner invitations I shouldn't accept. In my defence though, it was only my second week in Canberra and I was excited. It was a little bit like when I took my daughters to the theme parks when they were much younger they wanted to go on all the rides. All I want to do is go on all the rides. But a bit like those roller coasters, I've been on it once and I don't want to go on it again. So lesson learned.

On a more serious note, I've literally had hundreds and hundreds of conversations and I've had them with purpose, because I've met with ministers, secretaries, dep secs, CIOs, staff, industry private companies, owners of small companies trying to deal with government, all with the purpose of learning and understanding context and history. I really think it's important one anchors yourself in the journey and the context and the history before you come out and make too many sort of bold predictions and conclusions.

And important outcome of that has also has been to repair relationships in many instances and to build new ones. One thing I've learned over life and many, many years and many different experiences is that, you know rank and title doesn't demand respect. Actually, what gets you the respect is how you deal with individuals on a human level. Having authentic conversations, constructive conversations, fact-based conversations. Respecting diverse points of view, different perspectives. That's been a key objective of my approach is to build those relationships, and I must say, I've been overwhelmed by the warmth and the authenticity and the genuine welcoming that I have received. If there's one thing, if I can leave a legacy of one thing that you point to as the DTA is how we conducted ourselves and how we engaged with people across the IPS industry more generally.

I've been doing the typical thing that CEOs do. What do you do? You come in and you restructure. I have restructured the agency, but that's really to give us and our staff greater clarity around what their responsibilities are and what they're going to be held accountable for. We're now going through a process of recruiting and attracting the right talent and I'm getting close on a few appointments and I'll be delighted to announce those in the very near future.

As I think about talent, though, what I'm looking for, people not only with the track record and the experience and expertise, but importantly, with the leadership qualities. People that can engage at all levels of government, communicate with influence, and build those relationships that I think are so vitally important.

So what about the priorities of the DTA and we've landed on five clear priorities. As I outline them to you, I'd like you to think of them not only as DTA priorities but our priorities. Because in the context of the government's transformation objectives and its ambitions, the DTA alone can't deliver them. We are just one small part of an overall ecosystem of which all of you are part of, that collectively we need to work on these together.

The first priority for us is developing a really clear, pragmatic roadmap of what the digital transformation should look like and what we hope to achieve over the next 12 months and next 24 months. What do I mean by that? Well, I think it's important we anchor ourselves in what do we look like today. Of those key transactions, service events, information requests, life journeys that individuals and businesses are dealing with us at any given moment in any given day, what does that look like across the various channels, voice, physical and digital? What's the pragmatic view of our current digital maturity? Based on that, and recognising that the things we need to focus on should be those that are most important, most impactful and, importantly, doable, where would we like to be in 12 months' time? Where would we like to be in 24 months' time?

I think it's really important that we have a little more preciseness around the destination and something that, collectively, we can hold ourselves accountable to and measure, but importantly, inform investment decisions. We know with the budget guidelines that have just come out, and as I'm learning the process, and by the way, this is no different to the private sector, I never went into a planning process in the private sector that said, "Oh, by the way, you can grow your costs by 10% this year and don't worry about your revenue." It was always, "Cut your costs. Grow your revenue, and achieve the impossible." Government's no different. What that means is that we have to be very thoughtful around how we prioritise and where we place our investments and place our bets. That's a really important piece of work that needs to be done.

While I'm on it, I don't think we do a good enough job, as a general statement, talking about all the good things that do happen. One thing I've learned coming in, and I knew very little about the government platforms and what I could do online, and I have been going through my own personal path of discovery and signing up to things, and testing things out, there's some terrific examples of innovation and digital progress that's been made, and digital maturity. I called some of these out last week in an address I gave. I spoke about myTax and we know there's a bit of press going on around outages, but putting that aside for a second, the 3.5 million citizens and tax agents can now lodge returns online. That's up from 1.7 million just a couple of years ago. In the first three weeks, as Chris Jordan would tell you, I think they were up 350,000 returns were lodged in the first three or four weeks of this tax year.

And they're continuing to innovate. Continuing to use analytics to pre-populate information for us as taxpayers and to use analytics to profile us and to say, "Well, if you happen to be late with one tax return but you've been on time for the last 20 years, well let's not go after you with a sledgehammer." Let's have

better information, more personal and make our citizens feel a little bit more valued.

I mentioned some terrific stuff happening in immigration. Smart guides, the fact now that we don't have to fill out those little green forms. I always wondered about those. I used to change my profession. Can I admit to that? I always wondered if they'd find out. I was a doctor, I was a physician, a nuclear scientist. No, not really, but anyway I sort of wondered about those forms. But the fact they're coming back in, they're going to abolish the orange forms at some point, and ultimately, you won't need your passport. It will all be through facial recognition.

Even on the export side, using analytics to understand, depending on where importers are importing goods from, which countries, which cities, which exporters have a different risk profile and therefore all the certification that goes with that in clearing goods. You might sort of adapt, based on the risk profile.

My Health, I think, is an excellent piece of innovation. It actually saves lives. There's 10,000 practitioners now that can access health records, I think there's about five million individuals that have registered and that number will continue to grow. What we do know that misdiagnosis and lost lives often is attributed to poor record keeping. Something that really facilitates, in my view, a great social outcome is a terrific bit of innovation.

Then we've got myGov, a key citizen, individual-facing platform. There's up to 10 million registered users, almost 300,000 transactions, Charles is in the audience he'll be able to give me more accurate stats than that. I think a huge opportunity to continue to leverage that platform as we think about digitising more services.

I think we do need to sell the good news. And I do think we should be proud of what many people in this room deliver every single day. But clearly there's more to be done.

The second priority for us within the DTA is about working with agencies on improving those platforms that I've spoken about. One that we particularly focused on and we have accountability for is solving for digital identity. I believe there's no such thing as a silver bullet, but if you wanted to pick a few things that could really unlock value in terms of the digital experience it's solving for digital identity. Enabling citizens and businesses to identify themselves easily online and to have their identity authenticated. Not to have to repeat the process time after time after time, and do a little bit online and then have to go into Aussie post or into a centre link shop front and to complete the validation process. I think this is a really important initiative for all of us, and one that we're pretty excited about. We're going to be working with a lot of the agencies on solving for that.

I think it was Allison or Martin sort of referenced the digital service standards. That's something that the DTA has accountability for. It's as much about a standard but more ... It's a standard but also it's about a way of working. Thinking differently, cross-functional teams. Making sure we do the discovery work. Making sure that what we put out there is accessible. Really, the orientation for us is I don't want it to be seen as a compliance task. I actually want it to be something that we all embrace and look to move up the curve. Where are we in terms of our maturity around digital service standards? Are we at a five today? How can we get to a six? How can we get to a seven? Rather than you either comply or you don't. A slight sort of change in emphasis, but really important because research shows that if you get this right, you will absolutely there's a direct link between that and driving traffic to digital channels and improving the experience.

Web site and content. This gets often mentioned in the context of gov.au. There's absolutely a case for consolidation of landing sites for individuals and businesses. Depending on who you ask, I've heard numbers of anything between 1,100 and 1,500 different unique websites. 50 million pages of unique content. What I can confidently say is that that's too many, and there's work to be done. I think we all recognise that. I think, for us, working with agencies, and currently we are working with 30 agencies on this, what are the opportunities to consolidate websites, not only do the consolidation though. Think about how we improve the content and the way information is presented to individuals and businesses.

I used an example of my daughter, Laurie. She's delighted that she gets mentioned in speeches, by the way, she's not shy about it. She's just started working, she's got a job. She's 15 years old and wanted to know what the minimum wage was. I said, "well, I don't know. Go on the website and find out." And she did, and she's digitally savvy. You'd be surprised how long it took her to find the right website and go through all the links. Not only that, when she got the information she couldn't understand it. Now, I know she's my child and I'm a little biased, but she's pretty intelligent, you know? Anyway, she got the information in the end. I don't know what the outcome is, I've said, "You need to take it to your boss and have a conversation." I think she's still waiting. She still has a job though, so that's pretty encouraging. That's sort of a real example of there's always work we can in the space and it's important work.

Our third priority, and this is part of the broader mandate of the DTA, is the portfolio monitoring and the advice that we are now giving government. If you think about it, there's in excess around about six billion dollars of taxpayers' money being spent on projects at any point in time. It's really important that we know how they go. What we do know, not everything will go according to plan. That is life. But it's really important that we know that things are not going according to plan, and where they're not going according to plan, and what we're going to do about it.

I think of this in a little bit if I was a venture capitalist and every single one of these projects was a business I'd invested in. Or if I was a fund manager, and I'd invested in a range of stocks. I'd do my analysis and I'd want to which ones were performing and which ones weren't. To Martin's point, there will be a day when we started out on something, it seemed like a good idea at the time, and circumstances change. Rather than resolutely just keep going down that path, by actually having the courage to call it, and saying, "We're no longer going to do this, and we're going to shut it down." As opposed to continuing to throw good money after bad money.

What are those other initiatives, that perhaps are encountering some difficulty and need a little bit of intervention, just to remediate them? Importantly, what are the opportunities where we can look across the portfolio and say we've identified five agencies or six agencies working on something that's quite similar? Is there an opportunity to work together on this, to collaborate to leverage platforms, move things into the Cloud, and to provide meaningful insights and advice? Included in this is setting projects up for success. Doing the discovery work, doing the prototype, really thinking differently about how we construct business cases before we spend too much money on, I guess what I'd call "the PowerPoint thinking" and really doing more around don't tell me, show me. To inform our thinking, to create better business cases, better decisions, and set these things up for success.

There's a lot of ongoing data collection, and many of you in the room might be asked for data, but that's why we're asking for the data. Our ambition is to present that in dashboards and play it back to you so you can see the same insights that we're deriving.

Our fourth priority is all about the transformation of procurement. This is an ongoing journey, and this predates me, obviously, and many of us, but actually there's this ongoing desire to improve the way we procure services for government. There's a number of dimensions to this. One is negotiating whole of government agreements. I think this is a great opportunity and we're working with one at the moment and, I must say, I've been delighted by the level of collaboration and participation by CIIs and CFIs of the agencies. With a mindset of saying, "Let's not only think about what's good for my agency, but let me think of what's good for the whole of government. Let's come together, and negotiate better deals, better value, for government and therefore for taxpayers with some of the larger suppliers."

Another aspect of this, though, is really making it easier for small and medium Aussie companies to do business with government. We know this is a contentious issue and we know it's difficult. I've caught up with a number of owners of companies to find out what it's like. There are some significant barriers to entry, and some of them will be difficult to overcome. But I think at least we need to face into them and try to do something different. Interesting, I think part of it is a mindset. It is quite easy for all of us, when we have long-established relationships, incumbency, to defer to those and roll those over.

There's often good reason for that, I'm not being critical of that. But I really want to encourage all of us to think about what are those opportunities to give some of these smaller companies a go. It's not an all-or-nothing approach. Give them a go in a small part of the business and see how they go. We'll try it out in one agency, and see what happens.

What I do know from these small companies, they would rather get a little bit of government business than a grant. In terms of their evaluation and their being able to finance their business and deal with the banks, their leverage factor is seven times if they actually have a contract with government.

The other aspect for me is transparency. One of the things I would like to drive is greater transparency in the marketplace around what different vendors are charging and their list prices. If you think about it in your personal life, you can price compare on just about anything. Doesn't mean that's exactly what you pay in the end, I mean, that's what you negotiate. Allowing vendors to see, and system integrators and everything else, and software as a service, what others are charging. Now this might be uncomfortable for some in some of those organisations. But I think transparency is an important enabler in driving competition and increased participation.

The other one is an interesting one, which is all around security. The feedback I get from these organisations is, "We got to get our product certified, we got to get our staff security cleared, and that costs a lot of money." For a small business, sometimes that's prohibitive. I'm still on my learning journey and I'm not yet sure what the risk parameters are and how we profile different product types, different service categories and all of that, but perhaps there's an opportunity to change our mindset around risk and make it a little bit easier for these organisations to participate.

Then our final priority's all around digital capability uplift. We are the Digital Transformation Agency for the commonwealth government of Australia, and I think we should behave like that. What do we bring to the party? One is the training that we are rolling out. We've trained out about 130 people across the agencies around the digital service standards. I really want to broaden that, and we have a mandate working with, I think I saw Steph Foster in the crowd, working with Steph and her team. Hi Steph. With the APSC around a broader digital capability uplift programme, and what does that look like.

I think there's an amazing opportunity, particularly to participate with the private sector. What would a service catalogue look like? How could we create a programme, virtual, real, classroom, and a variety of aspects that enable all of us from the most senior people in the public service to the most junior people, to be able to sign up and go an learn what's this thing called digital? Because it's a lot more than programming and building prototypes. It's actually a way of working, it's the way you think, it's the way you approach things. So new skills and capabilities, and I think there's much we can do.

We are leading the process for recruiting grads and cadets into the APS, and I think we have a target of about 200 places we want to fill next year. I caught up with the team last week that are leading this and they were massively enthusiastic. They say the quality of the young people that we are attracting is simply amazing. How do we get them into this environment, but importantly, how do we allow them to grow and thrive and inject new ideas and thinking?

Much to be done, but one that I'm particularly excited about and linked to that is building innovation labs in the DTA, both here and in Sydney. To create dedicated work areas where you can send your staff to come in and work on real issues and at the same time then grow skills and capability. The bigger agencies have the resources to do that already, and I'd encourage those to continue to do that. I think any agency, if you're thinking about innovation, create some dedicated space where your staff can go in there and work on real issues in a new way.

What does that mean? If I sort of take it up a level, more broadly, in terms of the government's overall ambitions around improving digital maturity, so channel migration, digital uptake, improving the service outcome and effectiveness of ICT spend. Martin alluded to this a little bit in his opening remarks. Being an economist, I did my research, my discovery work, and knowing who I was meeting I thought, "Well, I better come with a formula," for my interview because that will get me the job. So I did come with a formula. Martin will recall this, as well as Rosemary and Katherine.

I said $NT + OO = EOO$. New technology plus old organisation equals an expensive old organisation. It was a formula that I used when I did a bit of advisory work from about 20 years ago, and I continue to use it, really to make the point, and Martin made this very well. Simply replacing old kit with new kit doesn't transform anything. It's got to start with the business transformation and how you think about the outcomes you want to achieve and why you want to achieve those outcomes, and work back from that. Technology is, obviously, a critical enabler. When I used to use that formula, the word "culture" wasn't really that explicit, it was probably more implied.

But Martin, you'll be pleased to know I have a new formula now. $CC + CT = VC$. What does that stand for? Well, customer centricity, CC, it's all about the customer. What we do know across private sector and the public sector, what do we want as individuals, as business owners? It comes down to four things. In everything I want to do I want it to be simple and easy. Take the hassle factor out of it. I want it to be safe and secure. I want to be empowered, 24 by seven, I want to be able to get stuff done when I want to do it, how I want to do it, wherever I want to do it. And finally, I want to feel valued. In this world of mass digitization, I'm still a human, I still have feelings, I still have emotions, and I want you to know me, and I want things to be personalised.

Those four themes, I think, present themselves in all environments. If I'm paying my taxes, I want it to be easy. I want it to be safe and secure. I want to

be able to do it Sunday afternoon, if it works for me, and by the way, when I sign on, gee, it would be helpful if you knew who I was and didn't ask for the same information again, and you could present content. Just a simple example.

Interesting, a bit of research, and there's always research around culture, and the word gets used a lot. But some research recently across 40 countries, in 60% of cases, said that culture was the number one hurdle to affecting meaningful change. The other interesting part of that research was there is a disconnect between what us as senior leaders thought was going on and what staff at the most junior levels thought, and often they're disconnect.

What I've learned is culture's all about role modelling, and it starts at the very top. At NAB, not a day went by that I didn't think about the customer and the competition. It was one thing for me to say customers are important, but how did I demonstrate to my staff that I meant what I said? For me, it was the simple things. Every management meeting I had, I had a customer turn up. Number one on the agenda item: voice of customer. Real customers coming in to talk about their business and how they experienced NAB, so that we could learn. In the performance metrics, I had my financial metrics that were really important, my people metrics that were really important, and I had my customer metrics. What was our advocacy score and what was the specific feedback that customers were giving us on how they were experiencing dealing with NAB?

That all about the role modelling, and I think the challenge for us as senior leaders is how do we role model that to our staff in the questions we ask, in our performance reporting, in how we turn up. Don't underestimate the length of the shadow that we all cast and the vital importance of that role modelling.

That's the customer centricity aspect of it. The CT, the connected technology part of it, the second part of that equation. It's all about platforms, ecosystems. At the address I gave a couple of weeks ago I used the Uber as an example, and I use Uber because it's a good example. Notwithstanding, I had someone write back to me and say, "Notwithstanding that what they do is illegal." Anyway, putting that aside, I use Uber and it's a great experience. But if you think about it, they've taken a maps application, a booking, a reservation application, a payments application, a customer feedback application, and a driver network established and a passenger network established, and they've connected it and they've created an ecosystem. If I compare that to the Melbourne taxi industry, could get into trouble for saying that, but anyway, it's a better outcome. It's the customer centricity that's manifested itself in the way they think about connecting platforms.

Data, though, is where it all comes home. If I think about new ways of thinking and new business models, which is all about this connected technology, I think this is where it really comes home. I think that's something that, for us, I mentioned digital identity, but clearly data is a core component of that. But it's pervasive, as we think about it more broadly, as we think about our change agenda.

I have now read the data, the Productivity Commission report, which I admitted to not having read a few weeks ago and I got censored by the chairman of the Productivity Commission, so there we go. I want to read you one key excerpt. "Extraordinary growth in data generation and usability has enabled a kaleidoscope of new business models, products and insights. Data frameworks and protections developed prior to sweeping digitization need reform. This is a global phenomenon, and Australia, to its detriment, is not yet participating." There's a lot of good stuff in there, and if you haven't read it you should read it. Basically, one of the points that it's making a lot of the legislation and the secrecy acts, I guess our risk tolerances, our mindset and all of that, need to change.

Unlocking this thing called data. What we do know is that citizens and businesses want their data to be used productively. In the social media sense, we're far more free with our data. We probably care less. But when it comes to government, there's a natural aversion as we know. Why do you want this information on me? How are you going to use it? Is it safe and secure? Are you going to use it to my detriment? I think there's much we need to do around the technical aspects of data, and there's some of these tougher issues we need to solve around legislation and privacy acts and our own risk tolerances. We need to lean into that, and I think the DTA would love to participate in that with others. But importantly, I think there's a huge change management task ahead for government, convincing citizens and businesses that this is important and it's to their benefit. This is what we want to change, why we want to change it and what it means for them. I'll leave that floating out there.

I think if you get this customer centricity right and this platforms new way of thinking connected then I count on the conclusion is you create value. That whole value creation. If I think about the government's ambitions and its transformation, ambitions particularly in the context of digitization, there's already good things happening but if we want to increase the rate of change, for me it's the customer centricity and the platform piece, bringing those two together will absolutely have a direct impact on the rate of change.

In finishing up, the role of the DTA, as I mentioned, these priorities are not ours alone. These are specific areas we'll focus on, but we really need your help and we want to work with you and engage with you productively and those relationships are really important. I think there's two areas we can help. One is collaboration. I do a lot of swimming, and when I'm swimming up and down lanes I'm not looking across lanes left and right to see what's going on, I'm just trying to get to the other end. That's for all of us. We're all busy and we all have our priorities, and that's natural. I think the DTA can play a really meaningful role in fostering collaboration on those few things that matter. Digital identity, whole of government agreements, data, leveraging platforms. Just a few, half a dozen, and we're going to get on those that will have the biggest impact. I think that's one area.

The other one is, I want us to show some leadership as the DTA. I think it's pretty cool, Digital Transformation Agency. My mates think it's great. Gee, that's an impressive job title. But it is. On a serious note, I want us to behave like the Digital Transformation Agency for the government of Australia. Bring thought leadership to the table, and new perspectives and encourage new ways of thinking. Lean into a few things like that. That's where I'm at.

If I think about those headlines that I started off with this morning, I don't want to be so bold as to predict what they'll be in future years other than to say I want them to be positive headlines. Let people see the DTA's played a meaningful and productive role and a critical role in helping the government achieve its overall digital transformation agendas.

For the people with the DTA, I want to have a culture that's vibrant and fun, but highly accountable, and we work productively with other agencies. I want a big talent drive. I want to attract the very best people to the DTA. That on your career pathway and the career pathways of your staff, you say, "You know what, you guys spend a couple of years in the DTA, you're going to have an opportunity to make a big impact. A disproportionate impact in the context of the size of the agency. And you're going to learn some great skills and great capabilities and it'll be a springboard for future career success."