



Times of Transition: Transitions, Trust and Learning

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The transition period



Transition to a new government is a crucial period:

- Maximum ‘political capital’ exists but mistakes can use it up very quickly
- Public fallout from mistakes and controversies can stick and make it harder down the track
- The first few months often set the tone and culture for the relationship. Use them well.
- Misunderstandings and wrong steps – on both ministerial and public service side – can set relationships back for a long time
- But we can all learn and improve!

Effective Transitions



Aim:

“To make sure that every government governs as well as we (ministers, staff and public servants) can help it to do”

How?

“A strong sense of **understanding** and **trust** on all sides ... is required to achieve the goal of good government”

- Dr David Kemp, former Minister and Chief of Staff to PM

Opportunities and challenges



Opportunities presented by a new government:

- Effect (sometimes long overdue) change
- Implement new policies
- Set the agenda

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Challenges:

- Inexperience
- Wrong skill set
- Inadequate portfolio knowledge
- Lack of relationships and networks
- Understanding of government

Different levels of expertise and interest



Sphere of government	Minister	Public service
Politics	High-Medium	Low-Medium
Policy	Low-High	Medium-High
Administration	Low	High

Suggestions for a better relationship with your Minister



1. **Know your roles, and theirs, and respect them**

Suggestions for a better relationship with your Minister



1. Know your roles, and theirs, and respect them
2. **Know you Minister's priorities, enthusiasms and skills**
 - Specific – e.g. election promises, legislation
 - General – policy directions, principles
 - Networks, stakeholders, connections
 - Skills – media, Parliament, community, policy

Suggestions (cont'd)



3. Know their preferences and pressure points

- Briefings – written or verbal
- Briefing notes
- Meetings – frequency, note-taking, attendance
- Events – preparation
- Speeches – preparation, delivery
- Parliament
- Media
- Cabinet

Suggestions (cont'd)



- 4. Anticipate, prepare for crises/critical incidents**
 - Internal game-playing
 - Scenario exercises
 - Action plans

Suggestions (cont'd)



4. Anticipate, prepare for crises / critical incidents
 - Internal game-playing
 - Scenario exercises
 - Action plans

5. **Avoid surprises - don't hide bad news!**

Suggestions (cont'd)



4. Anticipate, prepare for crises / critical incidents
 - Internal game-playing
 - Scenario exercises
 - Action plans

5. Avoid surprises - don't hide bad news!

6. **Find good news on a regular basis**

Suggestions (cont'd)



7. Keep track!

- **Internally:**
 - Election Promises
 - Program implementation
 - Program/policy outcomes

Suggestions (cont'd)



7. Keep track!

- Internally:
 - Promises
 - Program implementation
 - Program/policy outcomes
- **Externally:**
 - Stakeholders
 - Opposition
 - Other states
 - Research

Suggestions (cont'd)



8. **Use time with Minister wisely and efficiently**
 - Time pressures on ministers are intense
 - Install routines – and check they are working
 - Get to the point
 - Allow time for thinking, consulting and deliberating
 - Choose right time for bigger picture discussions
 - Don't waste meetings when you get them

And remember ...



- Ministers – and departments – are all different
- Competing time and other pressures are ever-present. Department is one priority among many
- Ministers are not always masters of their own destiny – external events and factors can blow even the most prepared Minister off course
 - Critical incidents
 - Commonwealth
 - Cabinet/Premier/Parliament/Media
- Be realistic, understand where they're coming from, adapt and make it work

Parting thoughts



Understanding and **trust** don't come naturally.
They need to be worked at and earned.
Do it by demonstrating :

- Competence
- Openness
- A willingness to learn and admit mistakes
- Commitment to achieve shared goals