GOVIS 2025 Conference – Creative Digital Government

Day 1: Monday 1 September 2025

Conference opening address
Paul James, Government Chief Digital Officer
9:10 am - 9:30 am

After several senior roles in the New Zealand public service, Paul has extensive experience in strategic policy development, leading change, and working collaboratively and effectively across government and communities. In 2018, he was appointed Secretary for Internal Affairs, Secretary for Local Government and Chief Executive for Te Tari Taiwhenua Department of Internal Affairs. Paul also holds the role of Government Chief Digital Officer (GCDO) with responsibility for digital leadership across government agencies.

The GCDO leads work to uplift the public service's digital skills, and as the lead for the public service's use of AI, he has issued guidance to support agencies to make more informed decisions about its benefits and risks. The GCDO supports agencies and Ministers to align with an All-of-Government investment direction and manages a portfolio of digital products and commercial services that is currently used by more than 330 public sector agencies and organisations. The GCDO is currently leading work to establish an innovative and secure digital identity ecosystem and supporting an increase in the use of data and modern digital platforms to make real-time, evidence-based decisions.

From Te Tiriti to ChatGPT
(Keynote)
Richard Foy, Kaiwhakahaere, Pūnaha Mōhio, Te Puni Kōkiri
9:30 am-10:00 am

In this personal talk, Richard shares his thoughtful journey of exploration and discovery of AI. Through deep dives into its synthetic nature, various modalities, and seemingly magical properties, he shares his musing on the nature of consciousness and intelligence, trust, and the relationship we're striking up with AI. This exploration culminates in a call for public servants to define our relationship with this technology, that demands our human judgment and ethical leadership.

Richard is an Aotearoa New Zealand-born son of Chinese immigrants, accomplished public speaker, failed comic-novelist and a public servant who's enthusiastically committed to a career of public service and leadership. Richard is a former Chief Archivist of Archives NZ, our National Archives, an LDC (Leadership Development Centre) 2019 Fellow, 2018 Geoffrey Bolton lecturer (State Records Office, WA), President of ARANZ (Archives & Records Association of NZ) and a wannabe Starfleet Officer. Richard is currently Kaiārahi, Pūnaha Mōhiotanga (Knowledge Systems) at Te Puni Kōkiri.

Reflections on breaking the mould   *Sponsored by Druid Lab*
(Keynote)
Reverend Murray Edridge, Wellington City Missioner
10:00 am - 10:30 am

Sometimes there seems to be tension between the mahi that we are committed to and the things that we believe in. The question we need to address is - should we change ourselves to fit the requirements of our job, is it possible to change the way things are done, or do we need to reconsider what we do in the future?

As we think about the roles we do and the people and things we are responsible for, it is good for us to reflect on what we want to be known for.   As we explore the concept of values in leadership, we will consider the following questions:

What happens when the context in which we work conflicts with the values we hold?
What and who most influences the way we think and operate?
Whose opinion of who we and what we do, matters to us the most?

Reverend Murray Edridge has been the Wellington City Missioner since 2018. He has a commercial background as a Chartered Accountant, initially working in energy distribution and retail, media, and education. Murray has worked with children and families throughout New Zealand for over 20 years; including 8 years as the Chief Executive of Barnardos New Zealand, 5 years as a Deputy Chief Executive in the Ministry of Social Development, and being the inaugural Chief Executive of Genesis Youth Trust. Murray has had governance and leadership roles in a range of business, community, church, and sporting organisations for many years.

What does creative and accountable leadership look like?
(Creative Connections - Stream 1)
Reverend Murray Edridge, Wellington City Missioner
11:00 am - 11:45 am

Genuine leadership is not a role that you fill, it's who you are. For all of us, our lives are bigger than the jobs we do. So how do we bring all of ourselves to our roles in ways that are appropriate, sustainable, effective, and empowering to others. Creative and accountable leadership will be evident in the way we treat others and achieve the objectives of the business.

This session will explore the leadership styles and practices that enable us to do our best work, what we need to focus on in our own leadership, and what to look for and/or expect in the leaders that we have.

Reimagining data at Stats NZ: the journey to an integrated statistical data system
(Creative Connections - Stream 2)
Celeste Cutting and Simon McBeth, StatsNZ
11:00 am - 11:45 am

Stats NZ is transforming how it produces statistics by leveraging the Integrated Statistical Data System (ISDS), to make better use of administrative data, and connecting it with survey data, to deliver faster, more meaningful insights. The ISDS will connect data on people, places, and businesses through three key components: the Administrative Population Model, the Places Index, and the Statistical Business Register. This shift will enable a more flexible, efficient system. This presentation will share how ISDS is laying the foundation for a stronger, more adaptive statistical system—beginning with its role in supporting the delivery of the next Census.

Celeste Cutting - Current Unit Manager for the Integrated Statistical Data System Futures team. Has been at Stats NZ for almost 8 years, having worked in the integrated data space (Integrated Data Infrastructure Development manager) most of that time but was the Senior Manager who supported the final stages of getting the Data and Statistics Act 2022 across the line. Presented at the World Statistics Congress in Ottawa in 2023 on the ISDS representing Stats NZ.

Simon McBeth has been at Stats NZ for 13 (lucky) years first in IT, then as Senior Advisor Datalab where he helped design and implement the both the security features and policies that protect the microdata, and Nga Tikanga Paihere; the framework that helps guide ethical use of the data. Now he is the Product Owner – Data Integration in the Integrated Statistical Data System Futures team where he is helping deliver the admin data first strategy at Stats NZ.

Digital experiences that truly matter - overseas voting
(Creative Connections - Stream 1)
Jarrod Baker, Electoral Commission; James Guthrie and Steve Barnard, Pikselin
11:45 am - 12:30 pm

This presentation will explore the design and development of digital services that truly matters for democracy, including the Upload Voting Paper (UVP) Service, which addresses issues identified during the 2020 General Election. Focused on reducing duplicates and unreadable images, it introduces digital solutions like the ability to mark and sign papers digitally, improved voter instructions, and back-end infrastructure enhancements. These efforts align with the theme of Creative Digital Government by leveraging technology to streamline the

electoral process, increase voter accuracy, and ensure timely processing, ultimately improving the overseas voting experience in future elections.

Jarrod Baker, has been part of the Electoral Commission's Communications and Education team since 2016, and during that time has worked on 3 general elections, 6 by-elections, 2 referendums and a boundary review. Prior to joining the Commission his diverse career included stints in commercial radio, postal services, financial services, technology, orthodontics(!) and local and central government, as well as a sideline in standup comedy.

James Guthrie is Tech Lead at Pikselin. He transforms complex design requirements into maintainable, accessible code, specialising in real-time data visualisation, interactive mapping, and fully accessible, cross-device websites. He has led technical development for major projects, including work for Electoral Commission.

Steve Barnard leads client and partner collaborations at Pikselin, overseeing projects from marketing to post-development support. With 30 years of experience in New Zealand's IT industry, he specialises in software development, systems integration, and business management.

**From bespoke to routine: enabling rapid delivery of complex analytics
(Creative Connections - Stream 2)**
Simon Anastasiadis and Dan Young, Social Investment Agency
11:45 am - 12:30 pm

The analytic process to produce novel insights, often requires creativity on behalf of the researcher. While such results are valuable, the bespoke nature of their creation can hinder their repeatability.

Innovation at the Social Investment Agency allows us to convert bespoken analyses into repeatable processes, and from repeatable processes into routine deliverables. We present the frameworks and tools that enable this conversion. Their value will be demonstrated via application to the regular production of a public-facing data product.

Simon Anastasiadis is an experienced data scientist and IDI researcher. Alongside delivering novel analytics, he has a focus on capability building (via training of colleagues) and capacity building (via automation and systematic processes). Simon is the author of a range of IDI training materials including demonstration videos and introductory projects. He has published several tools designed to accelerate IDI research.

**What do public service restructures and technical debt have in common?
(Keynote)**
Annika Naschitzki, Victoria University of Wellington
1:15 pm - 2:00 pm

This presentation explores the tension between creative intent and structural reality in Aotearoa's public service. While the sector is full of ideas, the way we manage change often derails momentum. Annika draws on her research into recurring restructuring - typically done without method or monitoring - to show how short-term fixes win out over long-term thinking. Misalignments pile up: workarounds, gaps between policy and practice, and invisible distortions in how we work. The idea of technical debt offers a powerful way to name and track this "organisational debt" and push for more intentional, transparent, and equitable approaches to reform. If you would like to discuss this topic in more depth with Annika and others, then come along to the discussion session following afternoon tea.

Annika Naschitzki is a doctoral student and Research Fellow at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, and a specialist in Customer Experience and Service Design. With over 15 years' experience in user research, accessibility, and co-design, she has led service design initiatives across Aotearoa's public sector. Her work includes contributions to *SmartStart* and *Govt.nz*, and involvement in the "Better Public Services – Result 10" programme, which sought to improve digital interactions between people and government. Her current research investigates the drivers and impacts of internal restructures in New Zealand's public sector, focusing on how managerial culture, project management approaches, and staff

participation shape change processes and their outcomes. Annika brings a design-led and people-centred lens to public management and reform. She shares her reflections on restructuring, public sector reform, and design in government each week in her Substack newsletter, *Bowl of Fishhooks*.

Neurodivergence in IT: beyond the stereotypes (Keynote)
Rachael Hurren, Inde Technology
2:00 pm - 2:45 pm

Neurodivergence is twice as prevalent in the IT industry as it is in the general population, but half of all neurodivergent adults are undiagnosed. Often, they just have a sense that they don't quite fit. There are some things they are exceptionally good at - and other things where life feels like a video game stuck on hard mode.

What does neurodivergence look like beyond the myths and TV stereotypes? This talk will help you to gain an understanding of what neurodivergence is, and how it impacts people. If you want to learn more, then come to the Q&A session following afternoon tea - this will centre around your questions and offer some practical tips on how to allow neurodivergent individuals to excel.

Rachael Hurren is the Director of Learning and Development at Inde Technology, an employee-owned, cloud-based enterprise IT consultancy renowned for its technically led, outcome-focused approach. For the last twenty years she has worked with organisations to build cultures and development programmes that empower people to play to their strengths and excel in their careers. Holding postgraduate qualifications in psychology and education, Rachael is passionate about helping individuals understand how their brains work, what makes them unique, and how to leverage their strengths to thrive. Over the past five years, she has applied this approach to helping individuals and organisations develop a deeper, more accurate understanding of neurodivergence.

What do public service restructures and technical debt have in common? (discussion session) (Creative Connections - Stream 1)
Annika Naschitzki, Victoria University of Wellington
3:15 pm - 4:00 pm

This presentation explores the tension between creative intent and structural reality in Aotearoa's public service. While the sector is full of ideas, the way we manage change often derails momentum. Annika draws on her research into recurring restructuring - typically done without method or monitoring - to show how short-term fixes win out over long-term thinking. Misalignments pile up: workarounds, gaps between policy and practice, and invisible distortions in how we work. The idea of technical debt offers a powerful way to name and track this "organisational debt" and push for more intentional, transparent, and equitable approaches to reform. If you would like to discuss this topic in more depth with Annika and others, then come along to the discussion session following afternoon tea.

Neurodivergence in IT: beyond the stereotypes (your questions) (Creative Connections - Stream 2)
Rachael Hurren, Inde Technology
3:15 pm - 4:00 pm

Neurodivergence is twice as prevalent in the IT industry as it is in the general population, but half of all neurodivergent adults are undiagnosed. Often, they just have a sense that they don't quite fit. There are some things they are exceptionally good at - and other things where life feels like a video game stuck on hard mode.

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Day 2: Tuesday 2 September 2025

Conference relaunch
Mick Crouch, GOVIS President and Chris McDowall, Conference Convenor
8:45 am - 9:00 am

Remixing the rules of digital government   *Sponsored by Catalyst*
Andy Neale, Parliamentary Counsel Office
9:00 am - 9:30 am

Innovation in government doesn't always look flashy - but it can often start with a remix. In this talk, I'll trace the creative arc from early government web experiments in the 2000s through to today's R&D with AI. Along the way, I'll highlight how constraints - tight budgets, legacy systems, slow-moving approvals - can, and have, become creative catalysts. From the days of the single "webmaster", through the Web 2.0 era, the rise of closed ecosystems, right back again to a period of irrational exuberance in technology. I'll share lessons in trust, persistence, and collaboration that show how creativity can thrive when you make bureaucracy work for you, not against you.

Creativity in the C-suite panel   *Sponsored by Catalyst*
9:30 am - 10:15 am

Panel chair: Brian Norris, General Manager - Customer Experience, Catalyst
Panellists:
- Stuart Wakefield, Chief Digital Officer, Ministry of Education
- Jan Sheppard, Chief Data and Analytics Officer, PHF Science
- Alix Clark, Chief Information Officer, New Zealand Red Cross
- Sonny Taite, National Chief Information Security Officer, Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora

Creativity, it's a 'culture thing'!
(Creative Connections - Stream 1)
Pat McShane, Croga Ltd
10:40 am - 11:20 am

This presentation gets to the heart of what drives creativity in today's fast-moving, unpredictable world: Leadership. At every level, in every role, it's leaders - through their behaviours - who shape the environment where creativity can spark and thrive. No behavioural change? No real change.

We're all operating in a VUCA world - volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous - where creativity and innovation aren't optional; they're survival tools.

At the core of this talk is a simple but powerful truth: No Trust, No Creativity.

We'll explore how leaders build that trust through PEC: Perspective, Empathy, and Courage - the behavioural blueprint for creating high-trust and high-creativity teams.

The presentation is interactive with the audience where they will have the opportunity to explore the PEC model. While covering important topics, I deliver the presentation in a light and tasty collaborative style.

Pat McShane helps organisations lead through change with clarity and confidence. With 20+ years of experience—15 in senior leadership—he brings strategic insight and practical tools to drive team performance during innovation, transformation, and recovery. Pat's approach is built on Trust, Courage, and Performance: rebuilding trust during disruption, aligning strategy with behaviour, and developing leaders who thrive in uncertainty. Known for his pragmatic, results-driven style, he designs tailored programs grounded in real-world application. Pat measures success by lasting impact—empowered leaders, resilient teams, and organisations that continue to evolve long after his engagement concludes.

Trust by design: creative interventions in bureaucratic spaces
(Workshop, Creative Connections - Stream 2)
Emma MacDonald, Emma Naji and Fiona Wharton, Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, Stats NZ
10:40 am - 12:00 pm

Trust is both the most essential and the most fragile element of public service. Trust must be earned (or restored) and maintained through credibility, reliability and relationship. Citizens' trust is needed for them to interact with the government; access the services they need; and provide accurate information to enable digital government.

In this interactive workshop you will have opportunities to explore the crisis of trust affecting the public sector and how creativity can offer pathways to rebuild it.

The Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI) is a small team within the function of the Government Chief Data Steward at Stats NZ. A key part of CDEI's work is connecting people in the data ethics and innovation space across Aotearoa and making data ethics accessible, engaging, and practical. One way the team does this is by creating safe spaces where different perspectives and worldviews on data – and doing the right thing with data - can be shared.

At the cutting edge - where are AI tools heading next?
(Keynote)
Shivonne Londt, AWS   **Sponsored by AWS**
12:45 pm - 1:15 pm

Since 2022, AI has been disrupting industries and sectors with its growing capabilities. AI is evolving from simple chatbots to intelligent systems capable of handling complex, multi-step tasks. This session explores how these advancing AI tools can help transform and improve government services.

At the heart of our discussion is the need to creatively balance the tension between innovation and trust. We'll look at how next-generation AI tools are being thoughtfully integrated into government services, with considerations of privacy and human augmentation.. Through real-world examples, we'll see how these technologies are already making public services more efficient and accessible.

This forward-looking session will provide practical insights for preparing for an AI-enhanced future. We'll focus on the tools that are coming, the skills you'll need to be successful with these tools, including human-AI collaboration, and proven approaches for building public confidence through transparent, secure, and ethical AI deployment.

With over 20 years of experience at the intersection of technology, strategy, and transformation, **Shivonne Londt** helps public sector organizations harness the power of cloud and AI to deliver impact at scale. As a Senior Solution Architect at Amazon Web Services, Shivonne leads initiatives across Weather and Research, designing resilient, intelligent solutions that empower innovation.

Currently pursuing a PhD in AI, her research focuses on evolutionary algorithms and neural architecture search — exploring how large language models can supercharge genetic optimization. Shivonne is passionate about bridging cutting-edge research and real-world outcomes, especially in complex, high-stakes environments.

Previously Head of Engineering at ANZ NZ, Shivonne spearheaded omni-channel integration and process automation, transforming agile delivery across large-scale teams. Shivonne's background spans technical leadership, cloud modernization, and platform engineering, with hands-on expertise in AWS, Salesforce, and scalable digital ecosystems.

Social investment: The importance of data and evidence
(Keynote)
Tahia Eaqub, Interim Director – Data and Economics, Social Investment Agency, Toi Hau Tāngata
1:15 pm - 1:45 pm

Social investment approach is a fundamental shift in the way social services are commissioned and delivered in New Zealand. Data and evidence infrastructure underpins this transformation by making it possible to robustly identify better investment choices, by enabling feedback loops for providers that identify which interventions are working for which people.

Tahia Eaqub leads the Analytics, Data Systems and Economics teams at Social Investment Agency, which she joined in 2021. Tahia is passionate about connecting data with communities and decision makers. She has over 20 years of experience in data analytics and economic research and is experienced in leading teams to deliver high quality analysis in the social sector. She has previously worked at ACC, Reserve Bank of New Zealand, NZIER and Stats NZ. Tahia has a Master of Economics from Lincoln University.

Invent a government service
(Creative Connections - Stream 1)
Michelle Edgerly and Erika Pearson, DIA
1:45 pm - 2:30 pm

Designing and delivering government digital services is a rewarding challenge. In this workshop, you'll invent a government service using nothing other than some basic service "ingredients" provided and your imagination. Be as creative as you like to meet your users' needs. The more 'out there' your service is, the more fun we will have when we share them at the end of the workshop. The goal is to give you some insights into service design and delivery, including the opportunities of using emerging technologies to meet user needs. The winning team will be decided by popular vote.

Michelle Edgerly has over 25 years of experience across public service sectors and cross-government initiatives. As a Digital Strategy Practitioner in DIA's Digital Service branch, she supports the Government Chief Digital Officer. Michelle excels in designing strategic, implementable all-of-government programmes and is a subject matter expert in service modernisation, digital transformation, leadership, and innovation. She enjoys variety, challenge, and collaboration, drawing on insights from diverse domains—including performance arts. Michelle founded the NZ Innovators Network and has long been involved with GOVIS, serving on both its committee and conference teams. She values GOVIS as a unique and inspiring community of professionals.

Erika Pearson is the Manager Content and Customer Channels in the Digital Service branch of DIA, supporting the Government Chief Digital Officer. Drawing on interests in creative problem-solving, data-driven decision-making and working collaboratively with stakeholders, Erika is keen to help the public service make the most of new opportunities for digital services.

Data driven community grant funding
(Creative Connections - Stream 2)
Alanna Irving, Maria Ngawati, and Marianna Pekar (DIA)
1:45 pm - 2:30 pm

This presentation explores the transformation of the Lottery Grants system into one that is strategy-led, data-driven, and learns. We have developed outcomes data dashboards that provide a visual and analytical lens to align granting with the guiding legislation and with key outcomes of social cohesion, tino rangatiratanga, and community wellbeing. We'll introduce our new composite index, a modern tool for equitable and strategic granting, integrating data from the IDI to inform decision-making. This talk highlights the shift from output reporting to emphasising outcomes and impact, leveraging data for enhanced transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in community funding.

Alanna Irving is Practice Lead Outcomes at DIA, driving the shift toward an outcomes-led system, bringing a background in social enterprise tech startups and charity governance.

Maria Ngawati is Senior Advisor Outcomes Māori, with a background in public health and education research as well as innovation in Te Ao Māori evaluation methods and technology.

Marianna Pekar is an accomplished data scientist and Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) researcher, with a background in in scientific modeling, statistical analysis, and AI ethics.

Utaina: Connecting Aotearoa through Digitised Sounds and Stories
Zak Argabrite, Cynthia Wu and Joshua Ng, DIA
3:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Delve into the impacts of Utaina, a multi-year collaborative digitisation project with the goal of preserving Aotearoa's at-risk audiovisual taonga. Over the course of the project, 70,000 digitised audiovisual materials have been made available virtually by the National Library and Archives New Zealand. Our presentation will cover the creative systems that made Utaina successful: unique partnerships between national archival institutions and external stakeholders, adaptive approaches to project hurdles, and virtual reading rooms which reduce barriers to accessing audiovisual collections and holdings by making them available anywhere in the world.

Zak Argabrite is the Logistics Coordinator for the Utaina Project. He is responsible for overseeing the inventory movement and location control of AV items in scope for digitisation at the National Library of New Zealand and Archives New Zealand.

Cynthia Wu is the Audiovisual Digitisation Leader at the National Library of New Zealand. She leads a team of subject matter experts across National Library and Archives to digitise and preserve their audiovisual collections and holdings under the Utaina project.

Joshua Ng, Digital Preservation Analyst, Archives New Zealand. His primary responsibility is to maintain the integrity of the Government Digital Archive. In Utaina, he was responsible in the research and design specifications for the process workflow including file formats identification, collection metadata extraction and configuration of Rosetta DNX (METS).

Practical ways of providing joined-up services
Prashant Bakshi, Deputy Chief Executive, NZQA
3:30 pm - 4:00 pm

NZQA provides nationally significant services to New Zealanders holding records for over 4.4 million learners. Over time NZQA has been modernising its digital channels and ensuring they are aligned to evolving customer needs. Prashant will share NZQA's vision for thinking more broadly about an NZQA's customers' diverse needs, wants and contexts. To this effect, Prashant will discuss the work NZQA has already done in this space and the opportunities this foundational work has created to help deliver joined-up services for customers in future.)

Prashant Bakshi is the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategic and Corporate Services at NZQA. He has worked across the public and private sectors in New Zealand, Singapore and India. Prashant has experience leading teams across customer channels, Customer Experience (CX), data science and AI, information technology, and corporate functions including regulatory reviews and digital transformation. Prashant has an MBA from Victoria University, a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration from the Singapore Institute of Management, and a Bachelor of Science in Biotechnology and Zoology from University of Mumbai.