

GOVIS 2026 Conference – Courage to Deliver

Day One: 29th July 2026

Conference opening address

Sir Brian Roche KNZM, Public Service Commissioner, Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission
Wednesday 29 July, 9:10am - 9:30am

Public Service Commissioner Sir Brian Roche will welcome everyone to the conference, and lay out his priorities for a digital public service. There will be time for questions following his speech.

Sir Brian is the Public Service Commissioner and Head of Service. He most recently has been Chair of the Cyclone Recovery Taskforce from 2023 to 2024 and Chair of New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi from 2019 to 2022. Sir Brian was the Chief Executive of New Zealand Post from 2010 to 2017 and prior to this was a Partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) from 1987 to 2009.

Leading the digital transformation of government

Panel:

- Sir Brian Roche, Government Chief Digital Officer
- Chris Fechner, Chief Executive Officer, Digital Transformation Agency

Panel Chair: Steve Griffin, Assurity Consulting

Wednesday 29 July, 9:30am - 10:15am

Public Service Commissioner Sir Brian Roche and CEO of Australia's federal Digital Transformation Agency sit down with Steve Griffin for a fireside chat. They will share their perspectives on courageous digital delivery, procurement, and the use of AI. They will also take questions from the audience as time allows.

Investing in Australia's digital public servants (virtual)

Chris Fechner, Chief Executive Officer, Digital Transformation Agency of Australia
Wednesday 29 July, 10:45am - 11:15am

The Australian Public Service's Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan has been out for a few years, and along with the APS's 'Digital Profession' initiative it promises to take the APS's digital capability up a level. Come along to hear from Chris Fechner about the vision that is inspiring this work, the key challenges around digital capability that are faced by the APS, the initiatives underway, and their impact to date.

Chris Fechner was appointed the Chief Executive Officer at the Digital Transformation Agency on 13 October 2021. Chris is also the Head of the Digital Profession. Chris has extensive experience in state government services, focusing on large scale digital and ICT reform and transformation programs as well as implementing contemporary investment, contestability, and governance frameworks. Before joining the Australian Public Service, Chris was the Queensland Government Chief Customer and Digital Officer throughout 2020 and 2021. Chris was previously the Chief Digital and Product Officer at Service NSW. Prior to that, Chris held a number of senior positions across the NSW and Queensland governments as well as in freight and rail organisations. Chris holds an Executive Masters of Business Administration and a Bachelor of Applied Science and Computing, both from the Queensland University of Technology. As CEO, Chris is responsible for leading the DTA to ensure it delivers on the Government's digital transformation agenda, in accordance with the agency's executive order and the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.

Dispatches from the front lines of AI deployment in NZ

Madeline Newman, Executive Director, AI Forum New Zealand | Te Kāhui Atamai Iahiko o Aotearoa

Wednesday 29 July, 10:45am - 11:15am

What happens when organisations put AI to work for real — and do they deliver on their business cases?

This talk reports back on four dispatches, all real and relevant deployments – from small to large, with successes and cautionary tales. Three themes run through every story: answer a business problem, measure before and after, and watch for the unexpected — benefits and consequences alike. Dispatches, with numbers, from people delivering with AI today.

Madeline Newman joined the AI Forum as Executive Director four years ago. She has extensive experience in strategy, transformational change, building and helping people to see the potential that innovative technologies bring. Originally from New Zealand, Madeline spent 20 years working with people, process and new technologies including AI in the mental health, financial services and regulatory sectors in the UK. Her more recent work included helping to shape and deliver the UK's Financial Conduct Authority's internationally renowned RegTech innovation programme; and as Head of Innovation and Product for a science based digital mental health platform. Madeline is also an AI industry representative on a number of AI Advisory Boards, a mentor for the University of Auckland's Kupe Leadership programme and regular participant in national discussions on AI.

Introducing the Digital Government Target State

Jeremy Weir, Chief Architect, Government Digital Delivery Agency (GDDA)

Wednesday 29 July, 11:15am - 11:45am

This session provides an overview of the Digital Government Target State and the architecture required to enable a more connected, customer-centred digital government. It will explore the three core layers of the Target State - Customer, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), and Agency - and how they work together to support seamless, joined-up services across the public sector.

The session will highlight the shifts required at the agency level, including adopting common standards, reusing shared capabilities, and designing for interoperability. Attendees will gain an understanding of how the Digital Government Target State enables a coordinated, system-first approach to service delivery, helping reduce duplication, improve outcomes for customers, and position government to meet growing expectations in an increasingly digital and AI-enabled environment.

Jeremy Weir is the Chief Architect for the Government Digital Delivery Agency (GDDA), bringing extensive experience in enterprise architecture, digital transformation, and large-scale technology delivery across the New Zealand public sector and international financial services sector. Prior to joining GDDA, Jeremy spent eight years at the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), including as Chief Architect for the Services for the Future transformation programme. He also been an active member in cross-government architecture communities, including the Government Enterprise Architecture Group (GEAG), which he now chairs on behalf of GDDA. Earlier in his career, Jeremy led architecture functions for UBS in Hong Kong and oversaw architecture standards for the Asia-Pacific region. Jeremy's passion and mission are using digital transformation to improve the lives of New Zealanders. Throughout his career, he has focused on driving complex transformation outcomes, strengthening architecture governance and standards, and building high-performing digital and technology teams.

Mindset Matters - How do we ensure people and businesses remain relevant in the AI era?

Justin Flitter, Chief AI Officer, NewZealand.AI

Wednesday 29 July, 11:15am-11:45am

Curiosity and Critical Thinking are not just personality traits, they're infrastructure we need to remain relevant and competitive today. With nine years experience working with kiwi organisations on AI enablement and hot off the back of the 2026 Great NZ AI Roadshow; Justin Flitter will share the mindset, frameworks and best practices that will help NZ companies to scale and thrive with AI.

Justin Flitter founded NewZealand.AI in 2017 to help kiwi organisations discover why, where and how to leverage Artificial Intelligence. Today their AI Academy provides practical skills-based training to 5,000+ people. Their team of nine AI Advisors and technical experts have provided practical advice and solutions to more than 2,000 businesses.

Applied digital transformation

Panel:

- Karen Dawson, Group General Manager Commercial Operations, MSD
- Patrick Hindmarsh, Product Manager, Shared Digital Health Record, Health NZ
- Shanil Silva, IRD

Panel chair: Steve Griffin, Assurity Consulting

Karen, Patrick and Shanil sit down with Steve Griffin to discuss the practicalities of digital transformation. What can we learn from Inland Revenue's renowned decade-long Business Transformation, and what do they want to see from the rest of the public service as System Lead for Service Transformation? How is Health NZ striking a balance between long term vision and short term delivery with the Shared Digital Health Record? And how is MSD using procurement to lay the groundwork for future digital transformation initiatives?

The Courage to be Safe: Insights from New Zealand's First AI Safety Conference

Emma Humphrey, New Zealand Community Lead, AI Safety Australia and New Zealand

Wednesday 29 July, 11:45am - 12:15pm

Join Emma, AI Safety ANZ lead and former UK Home Office consultant, to explore key findings from New Zealand's inaugural AI Safety Conference. This session translates complex research into actionable public sector guidance on cybersecurity, bias detection, and model evaluation. Emma discusses navigating algorithmic influence and the undemocratic concentration of AI power. Gain tangible tools to build cross-agency networks and lead secure digital transformation, ensuring AI deployment is ethical, responsible, and "lifts all boats" for Aotearoa.

Warning – this presentation addresses topics that some may find disturbing, including sex trafficking and sexual abuse

Emma Humphrey is the New Zealand community lead for AI Safety ANZ and the organizer of Aotearoa's inaugural AI Safety Conference. With a decade of international experience, including four years as an AI consultant for the UK Home Office, she specializes in translating complex technical risks into actionable strategies for high-stakes, secure environments. Her core expertise and research focus on deepfake detection, misinformation, and identifying hidden biases within hiring algorithms and their broader impacts on job markets. Emma is dedicated to ensuring digital transformation is ethical, democratic, and accessible to all New Zealanders.

National Digital Transformation with Digital Public Infrastructure (Virtual)

Sponsored by Catalyst

Pia Andrews, Senior Transformation Advisor, Serial Public Sector Reformer

Wednesday 29 July, 1:00pm - 1:30pm

The speed, complexity and scale of change today requires public institutions that are adaptive, sensory and above all, systemically and unrelentingly mission-oriented. There is no point being efficiently ineffective, and yet many public institutions are so stuck driving efficiencies (for the sake of efficiency) and addressing internal crises (often the result of short term decisions) that the mission can become lost in busy work. "Digital transformation" means different things to different people. For some, it is simply digitising a process/form or building something "digital". For others it is the application of digital methods, mindset and technologies to systemically transform the mission and operating model of an organisation (or even an entire nation) to become fit for purpose in the 21st century: adaptive, sensory and scalable impact. Pia will present her experience on systemic digital transformation for nations and public institutions from around the region, and will share ideas on the digital public infrastructure needed to make it happen, beyond the usually narrow DPI scope of identity, payments and data exchanges. This necessarily includes the DPI required to activate the benefits of AI and mitigate the very real threats to society.

Pia Andrews has 16 years in the public sector, 9 in the tech sector and is now working on government transformation in the development sector. She is a serial public sector transformer and reformer, focused on adaptive policy management, policy infrastructure, participatory governance, high trust and legitimate systems and operating models (inc AI), citizen-centric public services, and real, pragmatic continuous innovation in the public sector and beyond. Her mission is to transform public sectors to be more humane, adaptive and impactful at the speed of continuous change, public trust and perpetual urgency. Pia was recognised in 2023 as one of the top 5 Women in Tech (leadership category) APAC, in 2018 and 2019 as one of the global top 20 most Influential in Digital Government and was awarded as one of the Top 100 Most Influential Women in Australia for 2014.

What does it mean to redesign your work around AI's 'jagged frontier'?

Dr Amanda Williamson, Director, Deloitte New Zealand AI Institute

Wednesday 29 July, 1:30pm - 2:00pm

Agentic AI is well and truly here, and Dr Amanda Williamson has seen it in action around the world. She will help unpack its implications for knowledge workers in the public service, gives us pointers on how it can make us all better at our jobs (repackaging work, not removing it!) and suggest ways for our agencies to better lead and evaluate their AI deployment efforts.

Dr Amanda Williamson is the Director of the Deloitte New Zealand AI Institute. She has advised six corporate boards on AI governance and investment, led enterprise AI deployment to 2,000 staff, and delivered AI solutions with up to 76% productivity gains across multiple sectors. Her foundation is technical: a PhD using AI-driven analytics and certifications across five major AI platforms. Amanda is a TEDx speaker, a regular commentator on AI in New Zealand media (RNZ, NZ Herald, Business Desk), and a Senior Lecturer in Innovation and Strategy at the University of Waikato. She is based in Wellington.

Running on empty: The neuroscience and metabolic cost of courageous delivery

Rachael Hurren, Director Learning and Development, Inde Technology

Wednesday 29 July, 2:00pm - 2:30pm

Courage is not just a personality trait; it is a biological resource. In the high-pressure world of public sector digital transformation, the "metabolic cost" of making courageous decisions often leads to silos, burnout, and risk-aversion. This session dives into the neuroscience of delivery—exploring why our brains struggle with complexity like Māori Data Sovereignty and cross-agency collaboration when "running on fumes." Learn how to manage your

team's "cognitive budget" to stay innovative and ethical. You'll leave with tangible, science-backed strategies to reduce decision fatigue and ensure your team has the mental fuel to climb the mountain of change.

Rachael Hurren is a specialist in human performance with a background in Psychology and extensive experience leading Learning and Development within the New Zealand IT sector. At Inde Technology, she bridges the gap between technical delivery and human behaviour, helping teams navigate the "cognitive load" of digital transformation. Rachael is passionate about neurodiversity and the science of high-performing teams, focusing on how understanding our biological drivers leads to more ethical, courageous, and innovative outcomes for Aotearoa.

Making the invisible visible to breakdown silos and create shared understanding

Joanna Guelland, Service Designer, ACC and Firuza Harper, Customer Experience Management Lead, ACC
Wednesday 29 July, 3:00pm - 4:00pm

Imagine ten Wasgij puzzles emptied out: no boxes, no images, a fixed deadline, and the task to complete them all. That was our challenge. We lacked a shared understanding of how all our internal and external parts worked together to support injured people through recovery. Learn how we embarked on a discovery journey, starting with a clear goal and a simple map. Applying systems thinking, service design and human-centred design we assembled the puzzles and put them on display. The result is a unified view which supports collaboration, helping everyone - from frontline to operations understand their role in injury recovery.

Joanna Guelland is a Customer Experience Expert, who has spent a career helping New Zealand organisations design and develop impactful customer-centric approaches. A linguist and a lover of learning, she has worked internationally and locally, supporting public and private sector organisations, spanning food and creative industries, manufacturing, outdoor sector, health and technology, always seeking to improve business efficiency, by strengthening customer understanding. She works closely and collaboratively with partners, customers, stakeholders and employees to understand desired outcomes, employing business acumen, strategic thinking, design thinking and systems approaches to understand solve knarly problems. Her superpowers are in connecting, facilitation and storytelling. But at the very heart of it all, Joanna loves applying her magic to making people's lives easier by improving their everyday experiences.

Firuza Harper is a Customer Experience Lead at ACC, specialising in transforming complex information into practical tools and insights that support better decision-making. She is passionate about improving people's experiences and outcomes by bringing the voice of the customer into organisational thinking and creating shared understanding across teams. Drawing on experience across customer experience, international development, and humanitarian programmes, Firuza brings a unique systems perspective to navigating complexity and driving meaningful change. At her core, she is a connector who brings people, knowledge, and ideas together to spark innovation and deliver better outcomes.

Boldly Go! Even when your inertia dampners are off-line and all your crew have beamed up.

Brenda Ratcliff and Kristan Johnston, Founder, MindMeld Coaching
Wednesday 29 July, 3:00pm - 4:00pm

Courage can be learned, but you don't need feelings to take action. So it says in the Good Psychopath's Guide to Success. That sounds weird. So what actually is courage? How can we get more of it? Courage is a leadership characteristic identified by the Leadership Success Profile developed by the Leadership Development Centre from the Public Service Commission. Learn three tools from coaching to boost your courage every day and turn your ideas from this conference into action.

Brenda Ratcliff is the founder of MindMeld Coaching, and works with individuals and teams to solve problems and achieve goals. She's a fabulous facilitator with deep experience working with different meeting personalities and groups. Brenda's back story includes treasured roles as the Director Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector, living and breathing the interface between government and the non-profit sector. She started her career in epidemiology and biostatistics, so she adores loves research and evidence. Something curious about Brenda is that she loves sci-fi, vintage fashion, and disco, but not all at once.

Kristan Johnston is an Executive Coach working with MindMeld Coaching based in Wellington. His activities are individualised professional coaching, group facilitation and training in MindMeld Coaching communication and leadership products. What clients have achieved by engaging with him is new confidence, asking for what they want and getting paid what they are worth. Kristan's back story includes an extensive stint in health & disability policy, and Child & Youth Programme Management. He's most proud of getting better access to health services for children and young people in & out of school and getting primary mental health services rolled out across the primary care network. Something curious about Kristan - Kristan is a big guy that loves miniature horses and will stop the car if he ever sees a tiny horse in a paddock. He's also really good at feeding people and makes a fantastic meal when challenged with limited ingredients. You should see what he can do with 2 onions :)

Day Two: 30th July 2026

Why does Aotearoa New Zealand need a sovereign National Data Infrastructure, and what would it take to get there

Doug Dixon, Executive Leader and Advocate for NZ Inc.

Thursday 30 July, 8:45am – 9:15am

Aotearoa New Zealand needs a secure and trusted data infrastructure to unlock the potential of digital technology for our government, economy and entire society.

Today's digital economy suffers from a number of steadily worsening problems: low trust in digital systems, overcollection of data, loss of control over data and infrastructure, limited opportunities to innovate and a digital divide that prevents our society benefiting equitably from the digital economy.

To thrive in a trusted digital economy, we must ensure that people and organisations have a high level of confidence when they interact with digital services, that they can control how their data is shared and processed, and that there are growth opportunities for our economy.

Doug will present a solution to these challenges. It comes in the form of the proposed National Data Infrastructure, which was first laid out in the following paper:

Sadlier, George; Dixon, Doug; Luczak-Roesch, Markus; Galster, Matthias; Evers, David (2024). National Data Infrastructure - Blueprint for Aotearoa New Zealand. Open Access Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington. Report. <https://doi.org/10.25455/wgtn.26132434>

The National Data Infrastructure would consist of multiple providers across the public and private sector, offering a seamless network of identity, data, access and processing services that are not possible today. It would eschew a "single platform" approach in order to create a level playing field, avoid technology and vendor lock-in, and clear the way for innovation and value generation. The economic potential of this new data infrastructure cannot be overstated.

Doug will give a high level overview of the National Data Infrastructure, and point to some of the opportunities it presents for digital transformation in the public service.

Māori data and AI sovereignty: Good for Māori, good for everyone

Sponsored by Catalist Cloud

Chris Cormack, He Māwhitiwhiti Matihiko ki te Kākahu o Hine-Raraunga, Te Kāhui Raraunga

Thursday 30 July, 9:15am - 9:45am

When AI systems are designed with Māori data sovereignty at the centre, everyone benefits. This presentation argues that the values underpinning Te Kāhui Raraunga's Māori Data Governance Model and Māori AI Governance Framework are not a niche concern, nor a compliance hurdle. They describe what good governance, good design, and good public service look like for any community. Five values guide the model: nurturing data as a taonga, being accountable, putting iwi-Māori data in iwi-Māori hands, using data for good, and decolonising data ecosystems. These values are operationalised through eight data pou and a parallel seven pou for AI. Together they protect against BADDR data practices, identified by Professor Maggie Walter, where data Blames, Aggregates, Decontextualises, focuses on Deficit, and Restricts access from the very communities it describes. BADDR harms are not unique to Māori. They are what poor data and AI practice look like everywhere, and the values that protect against them produce systems that are more transparent, more accountable, and more trustworthy for all New Zealanders.

Chris Cormack (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Waitaha, nō Moeraki) is He Māwhitiwhiti Matihiko ki te Kākahu o Hine-Raraunga at Te Kāhui Raraunga, where he contributes to the development and application of Aotearoa's Māori data and AI governance frameworks. He represents Te Kāhui Raraunga in international Indigenous data sovereignty forums, most recently the Global Indigenous Data Alliance AI workshop in Mexico City. He sits on the Privacy Commissioner's Māori Advisory Group and works closely with iwi, government, and the public service to embed Māori data sovereignty in real systems and decisions. Chris is the original developer of Koha, the world's first open source library management system, created in 1999 and now used by libraries in more than ninety countries. He holds a BA in Māori Studies and Mathematics and a BSc in Computer Science from Massey University.

Delivering a trusted government data system

Colin Lynch, Government Statistician and Chief Executive, Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa

Thursday 30 July, 9:45am - 10:15am

Government Statistician Colin Lynch will explain the latest challenges and opportunities facing the NZ Data System, and plans for an administrative data first approach to the census.

Colin Lynch was welcomed as the Government Statistician and Chief Executive of Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa in January 2026. As Government Statistician Colin is responsible for how and when we produce statistics, authorising all statistics and data Stats NZ publishes. The Government Statistician's duties and independence are set out in the Data and Statistics Act 2022: Section 14 Duties of Government Statistician and Section 15 Independence of Government Statistician Colin also holds the role as Government Chief Data Steward supporting government to realise the potential of data to improve wellbeing, while maintaining and building trust in its use. In this role he also leads New Zealand's open data programme. Colin was previously Deputy Chief Executive, Policy at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, a role he has held since June 2024. He's held senior leadership positions in both the public and private sectors including as Partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Deputy Chief Executive at the Ministry of Justice, Deputy Government Statistician roles at Stats NZ, as well as senior roles at the Treasury. Colin holds a Master of Arts (Economics: First Class Honours) and a Joint Honours Degree in Economics and Sociology from University College Dublin. He completed executive education in Leading Change in Complex Organisations at MIT in 2013. The Government Statistician is responsible for how and when we produce statistics. All statistics and data we publish are authorised by the Government Statistician.

Building confidence and governance to transform Stats NZ

Grayson Mitchell, Stats NZ and Matthew Treadwell, Databricks

Thursday 30 July, 10:45am - 11:15am

Join this fireside chat as Stats NZ moves beyond project-based delivery and take on the challenge of enterprise-wide transformation. Real progress isn't built through isolated initiatives, it requires the courage to align strategy, data, and technology across the entire organisation. At the core are the people making the climb. It's their culture—how they collaborate, build trust, and support each other—that determines how far and how fast they go. With strong teams in place, data and AI become opportunities to explore, not barriers to overcome.

Grayson Mitchell is Head of ICT Architecture at Stats NZ, leading the organisation's enterprise architecture and data platform strategy. Grayson has been closely involved in programmes such as the modernisation of Stats NZ's cloud data platform, helping teams shift from traditional approaches to scalable, future-ready capabilities. He is passionate about aligning technology, governance, and people to deliver sustainable change, and about building confidence to embrace new ways of working."

Matthew Treadwell is a senior leader at Databricks, helping organisations adopt and accelerate Data and AI transformations. Based in Auckland, he works with Public Sector Leaders and their agencies to modernise business strategy and transform technology stacks by unlocking value from data and implementing secure and sustainable AI. Matt draws on 15 years experience across Cyber Security, Cloud modernisation, Data and AI and has a key focus on supporting the modernisation and transformation in the New Zealand Public Sector.

From queue lines to genie first: How New Zealand's Civil Aviation Authority turned operational pressure into trusted AI

Roedolf Smit, Principal Advisor Workforce and Business Performance, Aviation Security (AvSec) at CAA
Thursday, 30 July, 10:45am – 11:15am

The Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand transformed its operational model by pivoting from fragmented, manual CSV-based reporting to a governed, AI-driven approach, leading with Natural Language AI. Triggered by the urgent need to address passenger queue issues, the organisation unified data across aviation, airport, and cross-agency stakeholders while prioritising a privacy-preserving design. This initiative replaced outdated manual processes with a scalable platform that empowers operational leaders to independently access trusted insights, ultimately enhancing decision-making efficiency and establishing a durable framework for AI-enabled operational visibility.

Sharing Data Across Agencies to Prevent Fraud and Misuse

Matthew Hancock, Principal Data Scientist, ACC and Demi Gandy, Fraud Analytics Development Lead, ACC
Thursday 30 July, 11:15am - 11:45am

ACC and Inland Revenue collaborated to share data safely by utilising an existing digital solution in a new way to detect clients who return to work while receiving weekly compensation. When people receive weekly compensation for their injury, the client has a responsibility to declare to ACC when they have gone back to work. Using PAYE data ACC identify clients who might be earning extra income while they are on weekly compensation. Previously, data sharing and case detection lagged by months but our new approach balances risk management with ethical privacy considerations, opening the opportunity for early intervention.

Matthew Hancock is the Principal Data Scientist in the Fraud Prevention and Investigations Team at ACC, where his role is to explore new techniques, technology and areas of potential fraud, indulging his passion for all things data. He has worked in the public sector since arriving in New Zealand from the UK in 2021, first in DPMC's COVID response group and then as part of MBIE's New Zealand Research Information System. Prior to living in New Zealand Matthew worked for 10 years as consultant on inorganic chemicals markets and as an analytical chemist

Demi Gandy is the Fraud Analytics Development Lead at ACC, where she leads the development of analytical tools that help detect and prevent fraud. She has a background in fraud analytics and investigations, including several years in Deloitte's Forensics team, where she applied data analytics to complex integrity and fraud cases. Demi is passionate about building practical, data-driven solutions that support better decision-making and protect public resources.

To AI, or not to AI: That must be the question - but not the only one

Julianne Hickey, AI Programme Lead, Department of Internal Affairs
Thursday 30 July, 11:15am – 11:45am

Artificial intelligence is no longer a future question for government. Borrowing from Shakespeare, “to AI, or not to AI” must be one of the questions we ask - but it cannot be the only one. Drawing on lessons from DIA’s AI Programme, this talk explores how public sector organisations can balance opportunity with risk, innovation with trust, and pace with good governance. It is a practical reflection (with some REAL lessons learnt) on responsible adoption, Māori data sovereignty, privacy, collaboration, and the human work needed to turn emerging technology into public value.

Julianne Hickey is the AI Programme Lead at the Department of Internal Affairs, where she has led the establishment work to support the responsible adoption of artificial intelligence across the organisation. Her work spans AI governance, policy, assurance, capability uplift, change leadership, and practical delivery. Julianne brings a people-centred approach to her mahi, with a focus on public trust, responsible innovation, cross-agency collaboration, and keeping people at the centre of change. She was the Chief Executive of a social justice agency, and this undoubtably influences her approach. Recently, she was the NZ spokesperson for Pope Leo’s encyclical: Magnifica Humanitas – On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence.

The courage to take the step: Information asset management and a pattern for the wider public sector

Elias Wyber, Chief Evangelist, TalentJam

Thursday 30 July, 11:45am – 12:15pm

Transformation is not really about technology, success is evidenced as a system-level behaviour change. This talk follows one such transformation, information asset management, from its past (a standardised register adopted by a dozen agencies and often modified, alongside home-grown tools) through its present (under-resourced, lagging, with stewards unsure of their responsibilities; a structural condition, not a personal failing) and looking to a future built on a system-wide view, transparent and measurable action, and honest progress towards goals. It then widens the lens: this is a 'two-dollar problem'. Typically, these problems are shared, too big for a spreadsheet, yet too small a market for any vendor to address, and the public sector is full of them. The answer is to solve each problem once, at system scale, and share both the effort and the benefit. We all have the same problems; we just need the courage to take the step, together.

Elias Wyber is the Chief Evangelist at TalentJam, building solutions to common public sector problems, including Information Asset Management, Procurement, and Skills Intelligence. His career spans over thirty years at the intersection of technology, capability, and transformation, from co-founding a games company in the mid-1980s, through nine years running a digital transformation consultancy, to senior data and capability leadership at NZTA, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry for the Environment. Elias is a frequent speaker on transformation and technology futures in NZ, Australia, and Europe.

Breaking the mould: the courage to deliver a government digital tool at startup speed

Kate McAlpine, Senior Science Advisor, Department of Conservation

Thursday 30 July, 11:45am - 12:15pm

New Zealand spends over \$50 million annually managing invasive weeds, yet detection of new incursions still relies largely on chance. This presentation tells the story of the Smart Weed Alert Tool (SWAT), an open-source digital surveillance tool developed through an unconventional government innovation pathway. From an environmental AI hackathon to a GovTech accelerator and ultimately government-funded development, SWAT demonstrates how courage, collaboration, and experimentation can deliver powerful public-sector digital solutions quickly and efficiently. This session will share lessons on challenging traditional delivery models, leveraging global data and citizen science, and delivering scalable, world-leading tools that improve decision-making and protect New Zealand’s natural heritage.

Dr Kate McAlpine is a Senior Science Advisor at the New Zealand Department of Conservation with over 24 years' experience researching environmental weeds. She has led nationally significant work, including the 2024 update of New Zealand's environmental weed list, and represents DOC on several national biosecurity governance groups. Kate is currently leading development of the Smart Weed Alert Tool (SWAT), an open-source digital surveillance system to improve early detection of invasive weeds. Her work bridges science, citizen data, and digital innovation to deliver practical solutions for biodiversity protection and government decision-making.

Moving to a cloud in 16 weeks: the Kāinga Ora story

Ian Rogers, CEO, TEAM Cloud; Jan Serfontein, Director - Technology Operations, Kāinga Ora and Jason McHenry, Customer Relationship Manager, Cognizant

Thursday 30 July, 1:00pm-1:30pm

Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities successfully migrated its Oracle E-Business Suite environment from on-premise infrastructure to TEAM Cloud, a sovereign New Zealand cloud powered by Oracle technology. Delivered in partnership with Cognizant, the project moved core enterprise systems to dedicated Exadata infrastructure across two isolated sovereign cloud regions. Completed in approximately 16 weeks with no business disruption, the migration provides improved performance, scalability, and operational resilience while ensuring government data remains locally governed within New Zealand. The programme demonstrates how public-sector agencies can modernise critical Oracle workloads while maintaining sovereignty, security, and compliance in a cloud-first environment.

Ian Rogers is the Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder of TEAM IM and Co-Founder of TEAM Cloud, New Zealand's sovereign hyperscale cloud powered by Oracle Cloud Infrastructure. Based in Wellington, Ian has led the growth of TEAM IM into a leading provider of information management, cloud, and managed services across Australia and New Zealand. He works closely with government and enterprise organisations to modernise critical systems while ensuring data sovereignty, security, and compliance. Ian is a strong advocate for New Zealand-owned cloud infrastructure and has played a key role in advancing sovereign cloud capabilities for public-sector workloads.

Jason McHenry is a seasoned business leader and customer advocate with significant experience across both Enterprise and consulting in the technology sector. With over 20 years in the tech and telco industry and widespread experience leading largescale teams, stakeholder management, commercial negotiations and projects inside Enterprise organisations, coupled with experience in governance, vendor management, and a strength for building strong business partnerships.

Digital Identity - it will transform our lives as citizens

Joerg Micheel, Security Consultant, Kaimai Security Ltd.

Thursday 30 July, 1:00pm – 1:30pm

As Digital Communications have become pervasive in our day-to-day lives, so have some of the extremely negative effects. There is a lack of Digital Trust and this has led to rampant and government sponsored cyberattacks, a lack of control over some of our most sensitive data, a lack of protection for our children, and the spread of falsehoods and sinister manipulation at a massive scale, to the point where it is threatening our Digital Sovereignty as a nation. Decentralized Digital Identity will address these issues and make our Digital Lives livable again by restoring our Protections and Privacy.

Joerg Micheel is a Technology and Security consultant with a little over three decades of experience in managing complex technology and infrastructure. During the past four years his specific focus has been on cloud infrastructure and cloud security and the role that Digital Identity plays in securing modern cloud deployments. He is presently working towards his certifications for ISO 19011, 27001 and 42001. Joerg is an active member and speaker with ISACA, ISC2, NZITF, GOVIS and PSN. In his talks he is aiming to make the complex simple and provide for a lasting insight that influences executive decision making in New Zealand.

Transforming access to legislation

Thomasin Sleigh, Kaiwhakahaere Tuihono Hongere | Online Channel Manager, and Zinal Bhadra, Kaiārahi Umanga | Agency Lead, Parliamentary Counsel Office
Thursday 30 July, 1:30pm - 2:00pm

PCO's vision has been to make the NZ Legislation website the single point of access for all law published in Aotearoa. This website redevelopment is a major step forward and reshapes how people find, understand, and use legislation. Our approach reflects the GOVIS 2026 focus on courage, collaboration, and innovation. We'll share practical insights from the redevelopment: how we decided decentralised approach was the best way forward, how we brought about legislative changes to enable this, how we collaborated with 100+ agencies, how we managed risk, large scale content migration, designed for accessibility, introduced an API, and user driven design.

Thomasin Sleigh as the Kaiwhakahaere Tuihono Hongere | Online Channel Manager at the PCO, Thomasin led the project to improve access to secondary legislation and reimagine, more broadly, how people interact with and find legislation in Aotearoa New Zealand. She drove the discovery, design, testing, and build of the new NZ Legislation website, ensuring it delivered a modern, intuitive, and accessible experience across devices. Her mix of content design, digital delivery, and user-centred expertise shaped a platform that now better supports democracy and everyday mahi across Aotearoa.

Zinal Bhadra is Kaiārahi Umanga | Agency Lead for PCO's project to create a single point of access to all legislation in Aotearoa. She works closely with more than 100 agencies that publish secondary legislation, supporting uplift in metadata and publishing practices. Her background spans digital content leadership, customer experience, UX, and accessibility.

Mai i te Aituā ki te Mārama: From affliction to understanding

Arama Mataira, Founder, Walk Together Aotearoa
Thursday 30 July, 1:30pm – 2:00pm

Mai i te Aituā ki te Mārama: From affliction to understanding shares a community-led research journey with West Auckland whānau and Māori communities through COVID-19, the 2023 floods, and Cyclone Gabrielle.

At the centre of this presentation is a simple question: what changes when data begins with people, relationships, whakapapa, and lived experience?

Through rangahau Māori, wānanga, Cups of Tea conversations, and Kumu systems mapping, this mahi gathered and visualised whānau stories in ways that protected context, strengthened meaning, and made patterns visible. The result is a transparent picture of what communities experienced, what was heard across many conversations, and what government, councils, and services need to see more clearly.

The presentation explores the tensions and opportunities of working between cultures, te Tiriti responsiveness, Māori data sovereignty, community voice, and storytelling with data. It asks: where does data come from, who

holds it, whose voice is made visible, and how can evidence move policy and service delivery closer to the realities of whānau?

This is a story of one collective walking together to make community knowledge visible and support change at a local systems level.

Arama Mataira is the Founder of Walk Together Aotearoa, an intercultural facilitation and systems change practice working alongside leaders, organisations, councils, schools, and communities.

She brings 30 years of experience across Aotearoa and Australia, including leadership and facilitation work with First Nations communities in remote Australia. A former school principal, Arama now supports groups to navigate complexity, strengthen relationships, and turn shared insight into practical action.

Her work sits at the intersection of culture, leadership, equity, community voice, and systems change. She is particularly interested in how people make sense of complex information together, how power is shared in decision-making, and how organisations can work in ways that are relational, culturally responsive, and grounded in lived experience.

Arama is Ngāti Kahungunu ki Te Wairoa, Ngāti Maru ki Hauraki and Pākehā

Delivering Digital Public Infrastructure for South Africa – the MyMzansi story

Sigurd Magnusson, CEO, Silverstripe

Thursday 30 July, 2:00pm – 2:30pm

How can governments move from fragmented silos to a unified digital front door without the big bang price tag? Sigurd Magnusson, CEO of Silverstripe, breaks down the blueprint behind MyMzansi—South Africa's single digital service portal. Delivered in just 10 weeks, the project bridges the gap between policy and people, and transforms hours of queuing into mere minutes of mobile interaction.

This session moves past the theory of digital transformation to show a real-world, proven framework for delivering immediate, cost-effective, and inclusive government services.

Key takeaways:

- **The "Lego-block" architecture:** How to use modular, reusable systems to slash delivery costs and meet strict digital mandates at pace.
- **Radical inclusion:** Practical strategies for bridging the digital divide, including designing for zero-rated data to ensure inclusion for citizens with limited internet access.
- **Data as taonga:** How embedding security rigour and data sovereignty into core architecture serves as an act of manaakitanga for citizen data.

Sigurd Magnusson is the CEO and a co-founder of Silverstripe. With a background spanning programming, strategic sales, and marketing, he has been instrumental in the company's growth and mission—notably leading the development of the Common Web Platform (CWP) for the New Zealand government. Having also led environmental policy programs within the public sector, Sigurd brings a unique dual perspective to digital transformation, focusing on how innovation can meaningfully improve public service delivery in Aotearoa and abroad.

Whiti - shedding light on data to support social work

Yvonne Hore, Team Leader Data Solutions and Bryan O'Leary, Technical Team Leader,
Oranga Tamariki

Thursday 30 July, 2:00pm - 2:30pm

Whiti is an operational reporting tool, using modern technology (Power BI) that is assisting social workers and other frontline kaimahi to see and understand information about their mahi with tamariki and whanau in new ways. It has been developed 'in-house' with a small and dedicated team of developers who have placed tamariki, their whanau, and frontline kaimahi at the centre of their design and development thinking. The work to commence development began in 2020, with an initial suite of reports delivered to early adopters in 2021, before a larger scale national roll out commenced in 2022. The design and development is iterative and responsive, and will continue for many years. An initial evaluation in 2023, usage statistics, and regular anecdotal feedback show that Whiti has widespread reach and is making a difference; and has reached over 3,500 users and has over 2 million page views. Whiti exemplifies 'courage to deliver' by bringing new technology to the organisation, whilst remaining focussed on making a difference for tamariki and their whanau. And it is proven to be successful!

Yvonne Hore has a background in social work, having spent 12 years in Cambridgeshire County Council's Social Services Department. Yvonne's waka to Aotearoa New Zealand in 2011 was on Air New Zealand. When asked why she came, the reply is 'why not?'. It was an adventure, a change, an opportunity. Having gained NZ social work experience in Porirua she seized the opportunity to move to a national team supporting the frontline. This led to a whole new world of legislation, Ministerial demands, stakeholder engagement, risk management, and a passion for service design. In 2021 became manager of the newly established Operational Performance, leading to a close alliance with the early work on a new reporting approach at Oranga Tamariki. Having provided practical and subject matter support for the first few years, she side-stepped to become Product Owner, and in 2024 transitioned into leading the Data Solutions team who design, develop, maintain and support data products at Oranga Tamariki. She has BA (Hons) Social Work (England), and MA Childhood and Youth Studies through the Open University, and the Post Graduate Diploma in Kaitiakitanga: Bicultural Professional Supervision from Te Wananga o Aotearoa.

Bryan O'Leary is a senior data specialist and Co Team Lead for the Data Solutions team at Oranga Tamariki, with a background in scientific research and extensive experience building and evolving enterprise data platforms in the New Zealand public service. Having transitioned into technical leadership roles, Bryan plays a key role in designing trusted reporting and data warehousing solutions that support frontline practitioners and senior leaders, while also mentoring teams and helping to build sustainable data capability across the organisation as part of a wider data transformation.

Digital governance: Let's stop pretending

Murray Wills, Director of Liverton Security and NZ Chapter Director of Digital Directors ANZ
Thursday 30 July, 3:00pm – 3:30pm

A provocative look at why international standards matter across every sector — and why they are especially important as government reviews how digital delivery is governed, assured, and improved. Murray will challenge the current approach to governing ICT operations and projects, arguing that the right people, with the right skills and experience, are no longer simply desirable in management and governance roles — they are essential. In an environment shaped by rising cyber risk, accelerating AI opportunity, and increasing public expectation, digital governance can no longer be treated as a technical side issue. Murray will outline practical options for change and introduce Digital Directors ANZ, a rapidly growing initiative focused on lifting digital governance capability across Australia and New Zealand.

Murray Wills is a 40+ year veteran of New Zealand's IT and business community, with extensive public and private sector experience. A former vCIO and vCISO for the Ombudsman and other organisations, he has led major ICT transformation and built agency ICT capability from the ground up. He has long been active in digital governance, including ISO committees for IT governance and IT service management, board and ICT staff governance training, and ICT qualification accreditation in Universities and Polytechnics. Murray holds an MBS in Information Systems

from Massey University and is a Chartered Member of the Institute of Directors, a Chartered IT Professional, and a member of the Australian and British Computer Societies.

Leading through challenges: lessons from the road to the Ironman 70.3 World Championships

Ellen Twiss, Kaiārahi Rōpū – Raraunga/Whakawhanake | Team Leader Data/Development, Tertiary Education Commission

Thursday 30 July, 3:30pm - 4:00pm

Using her journey to the Ironman 70.3 World Championships as a grounded, personal lens, Ellen explores what it takes to lead teams toward ambitious goals and deliver under pressure. Through stories from training and racing, she reflects on four leadership lessons: big goals demand growth, discipline is how growth happens, reflection turns challenges into progress, and preparation carries us under pressure. This session connects those lessons to leadership in complex delivery environments, where uncertainty, competing demands, and high expectations are part of the job.

Participants will leave with practical insights they can apply in their own context to build high-performing teams, embed continuous improvement, and achieve ambitious goals with greater clarity, resilience, and purpose.

Ellen Twiss is the Data and Development Team Leader at the Tertiary Education Commission, where she leads a team of data engineers and data analysts to deliver practical outcomes in complex environments. She is passionate about bridging the gap between technical teams and business users, bringing teams together to get work delivered, and setting high delivery standards. With experience across both the public and private sectors, and as an athlete, Ellen brings practical insights and real-world stories about leadership, resilience, and delivering under pressure.