

**Graduate School of Business**

**Innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector**

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**Declaration**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any other university.

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

Signed .....

Date.....

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*To my Mum: June Milsom*

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(Rest in peace)*

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(Rest in peace)*

## **Abstract**

This research sought to gain a deeper understanding of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector. It achieves this by exploring the perceptions of Leaders, Experts and Influencers regarding innovation, enablers and barriers to innovation, and examples of innovation in the sector. In this study, 'Leaders' were employees in the State Public Sector selected from the top two tiers of the Senior Executive Service position. 'Experts and Influencers' were individuals who were recognised as having specialized knowledge, skills and / or success regarding innovation and / or recognised as having the power to affect or influence innovation in the Western Australian Public Sector. In addition, the research also aimed to determine ways in which innovation can be enhanced in the sector.

The context of this study is the Western Australia State Public Sector (WASPS) which includes departments, trade concerns, instrumentalities, agencies and state bodies run by the WA State Government. This study is significant because there is little exploration and description of the perception of innovation in the Public Sector of Australia and a lack of common understanding of innovation in the WASPS. This study enables a much greater understanding of the depth, extent and success of innovation in this sector. Innovation is vital for a public sector needing to respond to Western Australia's growth and prosperity. The description of innovation and strategies for enhancing innovation will assist in the further development of a responsive sector.

This study adopts a qualitative methodology to explore the meaning given by Leaders, Experts and Influencers and their perceptions of innovation in the public sector. The qualitative paradigm provides rich meaning to the research questions for the study which are:

- 1. What are the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst Leaders?*
- 2. What are the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst Experts and Influencers?*
- 3. What are the barriers and enablers to innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector*
- 4. How can innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector be enhanced?*

A phenomenological approach is adopted for the study which allows the structure and essence of the phenomena of innovation within the public sector to be explored. Data was collected using semi structured, in-depth interviews and data analysis using a phenomenological approach was conducted. This ensured that the experience and meaning of the phenomena of innovation is described and explained as faithfully as possible.

The key findings of the study indicate that while there are pockets of innovation within the WASPS there is an overall need to enhance the capacity for innovation. An 'emergent model' is proposed as a framework that can provide an enhanced capacity for innovation in the WASPS. This is achieved by addressing the cultural, structural and human resource barriers that exist and by simultaneously enhancing the enablers that were identified in this study. The 'emergent model' takes a strategic view with special consideration for the context for innovation within the WASPS. Inherent in this model is the need for a clear and shared definition of innovation; the creation of ideal conditions for innovation; and the development of an innovation action plan. Superimposed on this model is the need for greater capacity for, and commitment to, meaningful public consultation. In addition the study highlighted a need for strong and effective leadership throughout the Western Australia State Public Sector to enhance innovation.

In making these conclusions it is recognised that this study is specific to the state public sector of Western Australia. This study opens the possibility of more extensive research within the public sector, specific to innovation. In particular, there is significant scope to explore the relationship between political and public sector leadership and the effect of this relationship on innovation. In addition, further exploration of successful innovation in the sector could better inform the type of agency in which innovation is successful and an analysis of the leadership factors that influence successful innovation. Further research regarding the ability of leaders to create an environment to enhance innovation within the sector, recruitment practices of the WASPS, and of resource allocation and its effect on innovation capacity is advocated in this study.

## Table of Contents

<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>13</b>
CONTEXT .....	13
<i>Public Sector</i> .....	13
PARTICIPANTS.....	14
<i>Leaders</i> .....	14
<i>Experts and Influencers</i> .....	16
INNOVATION .....	16
<i>Innovation in the Public Sector</i> .....	17
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	17
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES .....	18
OVERVIEW OF STUDY .....	18
<i>Research Paradigm</i> .....	18
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS.....	19
SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH .....	20
STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS.....	21
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>23</b>
DEFINING INNOVATION.....	24
CLASSIFYING INNOVATION .....	26
SYSTEMS APPROACH TO INNOVATION .....	33
CAPACITY FOR INNOVATION .....	35
THE LANGUAGE OF INNOVATION.....	38
INNOVATION AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR.....	40
<i>Innovation and Government</i> .....	44
PHENOMENOLOGY, INNOVATION AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR.....	47
<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH PARADIGM AND DESIGN.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>RESEARCH PARADIGM.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<i>Ontology</i> .....	54
<i>Epistemology</i> .....	54
<i>Methodology</i> .....	55
PHENOMENOLOGY .....	56
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH.....	59
<b>RESEARCH DESIGN .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<i>Initial Literature Review</i> .....	64
<i>Preliminary Interviews</i> .....	64
<i>Sampling</i> .....	65
<i>Data Collection</i> .....	66
Interviews .....	66
Interview 'Ritual'.....	69
Interview Questions .....	71
<i>Data Analysis</i> .....	74
Epoche.....	76
Phenomenological Reduction.....	77
Clustering Around Themes .....	77

Structural Synthesis.....	78
<i>Synthesis of Themes</i> .....	79
<i>Additional Literature Review</i> .....	79
<i>Synthesis of Emergent Themes</i> .....	80
TRUSTWORTHINESS AND RIGOUR .....	80
ETHICAL ISSUES AND DATA STORAGE.....	85
<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>87</b>
CONVENTIONS USED IN THE REPORTING OF FINDINGS .....	88
PHASE ONE: PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERS .....	89
<i>Understanding and Perceptions of Innovation in the WASPS</i> .....	90
Definition of Innovation.....	90
General Perceptions about Innovation .....	92
Importance of Innovation in the WASPS.....	101
<i>Enablers to Innovation in the WASPS</i> .....	103
Cultural Enablers.....	104
Freedom and Flexibility .....	104
Celebration of Success.....	104
Creation of Supportive Culture .....	105
Encouragement of Creative Thinking.....	106
Credibility .....	106
Premiers Awards.....	107
Being Receptive to Good Ideas.....	107
Support for Taking Risks.....	108
Empowerment and Devolvement of Responsibility .....	108
Willingness Of Leaders To Debate.....	109
Structural Enablers .....	109
Adequate Resources .....	109
Business Systems .....	110
Communication between Leaders .....	111
Change of Government / Minister .....	111
Innovation Committees.....	112
Public Demand For Services.....	112
Good Communication Channels .....	113
Facilitation of Frontline Innovation.....	113
Management of Risk.....	114
Interdepartmental Team Work.....	114
Quality of Ministers.....	116
Networking.....	116
Restructuring.....	117
Human Resource Enablers.....	117
Creativity and Talent Of Employees.....	117
CEO Support and Expectations .....	118
Employee Movement.....	118
Older Age of SES .....	119
Education of Employees .....	120
Employment of Right People.....	121
Provision Of Support For Managers.....	122
Summary of Enablers to Innovation.....	122
<i>Barriers to Innovation in the WASPS</i> .....	123
Cultural Barriers.....	124
Aversity to Marketing Innovation .....	124
Resistance to 'Change'.....	124
A Culture of Demoralisation .....	126
Aussie Culture .....	127
Public Pressure .....	128
Risk Aversity .....	129



Human Resource Barriers.....	130
Age Profile of Employees.....	131
Gender Issues .....	131
Outdated Human Resource Practices .....	132
Resistance.....	133
Professional Development.....	133
Paradigm of Working in the WASPS.....	133
Movement of Staff.....	134
Lack of Incentives .....	135
Workloads.....	136
Ineffective Performance Agreements of Leaders.....	136
Entrenched Staff .....	137
Structural Barriers .....	137
Funding and Flexibility of Resources .....	137
Being a Central or Line Agency.....	139
Decision Making Processes .....	140
Bureaucracy.....	140
Intellectual Property Policy .....	143
Innovation Policies.....	143
Political Influences.....	144
Public Sector Management Office .....	147
Restructuring.....	148
Rules and Regulations .....	150
'Silo' Thinking.....	150
Treasury and Audit.....	151
Time .....	152
Summary of Barriers To Innovation .....	153
<i>Examples of WASPS Innovation.....</i>	<i>154</i>
Summary of Leader's Perceptions of Examples of Innovation.....	160
<i>Comments and Summary of Phase One.....</i>	<i>160</i>
PHASE TWO: PERCEPTIONS OF EXPERTS AND INFLUENCERS .....	163
Definition of Innovation.....	163
General Perception of Innovation in WASPS .....	166
Importance of Innovation in the WASPS.....	169
<i>Perceptions of Experts and Influencers .....</i>	<i>170</i>
Structural Issues.....	170
Resources for Innovation.....	170
Bureaucracy.....	173
Department of Premier and Cabinet.....	174
Advice to Government.....	175
Evaluation.....	176
Change of Government / Minister.....	177
Goals of Government.....	177
Terms of Government.....	178
Federal Government .....	179
Interdepartmental.....	180
Workload.....	182
Turnover and Corporate Knowledge .....	183
Restructuring.....	184
Centralisation Policy.....	186
Public Sector Management Act.....	186
Isolation of Western Australia .....	187
Output Focus .....	187
Whole Of Government Approach.....	188
Seed Funding .....	189
Economic Modeling.....	190
Marketing Innovation.....	191
Innovation from Elsewhere.....	191
Private Sector .....	192
Political Interference.....	193
Systematic Approach.....	195
Ideas Generation .....	196

Networks of Influence .....	196
Summary of Structural Issues .....	196
Cultural Issues .....	197
Relationship between CEO and Minister .....	197
General Culture of WASPS .....	201
Risk .....	203
Recognition Of Innovation .....	206
Culture of Constraint .....	207
Public Pressure .....	208
Summary of Cultural Issues.....	209
Human Resource Issues .....	210
Ability of Ministers.....	210
Ability of CEO .....	216
Promotion Opportunities .....	218
Gender .....	219
Performance Management of SES.....	219
Movement and Attrition.....	220
Recruitment into WASPS.....	222
SES Recruitment For Innovation.....	223
Age .....	228
'Job for Life' Concept .....	229
Leadership by Premier .....	229
Leadership by Minister .....	230
Leadership by CEOs.....	231
Leadership Throughout The WASPS.....	231
Graduate Programs.....	234
Remuneration Of Public Servants.....	236
Specialist and Technical Talent.....	237
Leadership Development.....	238
Summary of Human Resource Issues.....	239
<i>Examples of WASPS Innovation.....</i>	239
<i>Comments and Summary of Phase Two .....</i>	243
<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>246</b>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>248</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>248</b>
<b>CONTEXT CONSIDERATIONS.....</b>	<b>249</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	249
REFORM AGENDA .....	250
PUBLIC SECTOR STRUCTURES .....	251
SHARED SERVICES .....	251
PROCUREMENT REFORM .....	252
E-GOVERNMENT .....	252
SCIENCE AND INNOVATION .....	253
LEADERSHIP AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.....	253
STRATEGIC PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP.....	254
<b>THE EMERGENT MODEL.....</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>PERCEPTIONS OF INNOVATION .....</b>	<b>257</b>
CURRENT STATE OF INNOVATION .....	257
DEFINITION OF INNOVATION .....	259
IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATION.....	260
EXAMPLES OF INNOVATION .....	261
<b>BARRIERS AND ENABLERS.....</b>	<b>262</b>
KEY CULTURAL THEMES .....	263
<i>Public Sector Culture.....</i>	<i>264</i>

<i>Leadership and Culture</i> .....	266
<i>Trust and Culture</i> .....	267
<i>Risk Taking</i> .....	268
KEY STRUCTURAL THEMES .....	269
<i>Organisational Structures</i> .....	271
<i>Resources</i> .....	273
KEY HUMAN RESOURCE THEMES .....	274
<i>Leadership</i> .....	275
Leadership by Senior Executive Service .....	276
Leadership by the Premier and Government.....	277
<b>THE EMERGENT MODEL: ENHANCEMENT OF INNOVATION IN THE WASPS.....</b>	<b>280</b>
A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO INNOVATION .....	280
<i>Consideration of the Context of the WASPS</i> .....	283
<i>Establishing a Vision for the WASPS</i> .....	284
<i>Identifying Key Strategic Priorities Areas For Innovation</i> .....	286
<i>Adoption of a Clear and Shared Definition of Innovation</i> .....	287
<i>Creation of Ideal Conditions for Innovation</i> .....	288
<i>Development, Implementation and Evaluation of an Innovation Action Plan</i> .....	289
<i>Public Consultation</i> .....	291
<i>Leadership</i> .....	292
<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>294</b>
<b>CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>296</b>
THE STUDY .....	296
THE EMERGENT MODEL.....	297
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	299
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....	299
<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>302</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>319</b>
APPENDIX ONE: LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS.....	319
APPENDIX TWO: PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT .....	321

## Table of Figures

FIGURE 1: A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO INNOVATION (ADAPTED FROM ROBBINS, ET AL, 2006, P 373).....	34
FIGURE 2: TYPOLOGY FOR INNOVATION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR (OSBORNE AND BROWN, 2005, P 151).....	43
FIGURE 3: OUTLINE OF LITERATURE REVIEW .....	51
FIGURE 4: JUSTIFICATION OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM (ADAPTED FROM CRESWELL, 1994, P9) .....	61
FIGURE 5: SUMMARY OF RESEARCH DESIGN .....	63
FIGURE 6: SUMMARY OF CRITERIA OF TRUSTWORTHINESS AND RIGOUR CONSIDERATIONS .....	84
FIGURE 7: SUMMARY OF RESEARCH PARADIGM .....	86
FIGURE 8: CATEGORIES AND THEMES.....	88
FIGURE 9: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, PHASE ONE, RESEARCH QUESTION ONE.....	161
FIGURE 10: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, PHASE ONE, RESEARCH QUESTION THREE. ....	162
FIGURE 11: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, PHASE TWO, RESEARCH QUESTION TWO.....	244
FIGURE 12: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, PHASE TWO, RESEARCH QUESTION THREE.....	245
FIGURE 13: THE EMERGENT MODEL - IN FULL .....	256
FIGURE 14: CATEGORIES OF ENABLERS FOR INNOVATION (ADAPTED FROM ROBBINS, ET AL, 2006) .....	262
FIGURE 15: CLASSIFICATION OF INNOVATION (OSBORNE AND BROWN, 2005, P 126) .....	282
FIGURE 16: EMERGENT MODEL - A STRATEGIC APPROACH .....	287
FIGURE 17: EMERGENT MODEL - SHARED VISION AND IDEAL CONDITIONS .....	289
FIGURE 18: EMERGENT MODEL: INNOVATION ACTION PLAN .....	290
FIGURE 19: EMERGENT MODEL - PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND LEADERSHIP .....	293
FIGURE 20: EMERGENT MODEL - IN FULL 2.....	295
FIGURE 21: EMERGENT MODEL – CONCLUSION.....	298

## **Chapter One: Introduction and Background**

### **Introduction**

The aim of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector (WASPS) as well as determine ways in which innovation could be enhanced. This qualitative research explores the perception of innovation from the perspective of Leaders within the sector, as well as Experts and Influencers of innovation. Leaders from the Senior Executive Service of the WASPS offer their perceptions of innovation and describe enablers and barriers of innovation and examples of innovation in the sector. Further Experts and Influencers describe their perceptions of innovation in the WASPS as well as offer their insights into issues and themes described by the Leaders. Finally strategies to enhance innovation are discussed and an 'emergent model' is proposed.

### ***Context***

#### **Public Sector**

The context of this study is the Western Australian State Public Sector (WASPS). This extends to agencies run by the WA State Government and includes all state Government departments, trading concerns, instrumentalities, agencies or state bodies established by or under a law of the state (Public Sector Management Act, 1994).

In Western Australia, Government departments employ 12% of the state's workforce. Of this 12%, 78% are employed by the State Government, which has been growing since the year 2000. The WA state public sector now employs 98,621 FTE in June 2005. As described by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (2005), 78% of the workforce of the State Government is employed by the largest 10 agencies. Further 56% of the workforce is employed by Health and Education, the two largest government agencies in Western Australia (Profile of the Western Australian State Government Workforce, June 2005).

The Western Australian Public Sector is governed by the Public Sector Management Act of 1994, which provides for the administration of the public sector and the management of the public service and of public sector employment (Public Sector Management Act, 1994)

### ***Participants***

There are two groups of participants in this study; firstly, Leaders and secondly, Experts and Influencers.

### **Leaders**

The Leaders in this study are all members of the Senior Executive Service (SES). The SES was established under part 3, Division 2 of the Public Sector Management Act (1994). Section 42 (1) of this act defines the purpose of the SES as being:

(a) to provide for a group of executive officers who are capable of

(i) furnishing high level policy advice and undertaking managerial responsibilities in agencies; and

(ii) being deployed within agencies, and between agencies, so as best to promote the efficiency of the Public Sector; and

(b) to promote the efficiency of individual agencies.

All SES officers are classified above level 8 and are appointed under the Public Sector Management Act. Persons applying for positions in the SES are required to demonstrate their ability against the following SES Selection Criteria, as follows:

- Individual Characteristics
- Leadership
- People Management
- Management of Physical and Financial Resources
- Policy and Strategic Development
- Achievement of Outcomes

In June 2005, there were 364 SES members, of which 24% were female and 76% male (Profile of the Western Australian State Government Workforce, June 2005)

## **Experts and Influencers**

The Experts and Influencers in this study were drawn from a variety of sources but all participants were recognised as specialists in innovation, had specialized knowledge, skills and /or success regarding innovation, and / or were recognised as having the power to affect or influence innovation in the Western Australian Public Sector. These participants were determined through networking with a variety of agencies including the non-Government sector, Small Business Development Commission, Universities, Chamber of Commerce and Industry and all levels of Government.

## ***Innovation***

As stated, the aim of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of innovation in the WASPS. An initial exploration of the meaning of innovation is important. Fonseca (2002) points out that most writers on innovation seem to accept that innovation leads to new ways of doing things and to new solutions to the problem of resource scarcity. He writes that regardless of whether innovation is thought of as a hard scientific and technological process, a rational management process, or a soft intuitive human process, all perspectives have in common the assumption that innovation is a phenomenon that can be subjected to human control. This perspective takes for granted that people can purposefully design the conditions under which innovation will occur.



## **Innovation in the Public Sector**

The difficulties of innovation in the public sector are outlined by Altshuler and Behn (1998) who explore how innovation fits with the accountability of bureaucracies to higher political authorities. They write that in the public sector, elected politicians make policy, and bureaucrats are required to implement the policy without unreasonably stretching the power limits of discretion.

In view of the nature of innovation and the focus of this study, it was recognised that the research questions and objectives needed to be broad enough to capture the phenomena of innovation in the WASPS. In addition it was important that the perceptions of both Leaders and also of Experts and Influencers were captured as completely as possible. The following research questions and objectives in this study have attempted to achieve this.

### ***Research Questions***

The primary focus of the study is to answer the following research questions:

- 1. What are the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst Leaders?*
- 2. What are the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst Experts and Influencers?*
- 3. What are the barriers and enablers to innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector*
- 4. How can innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector be enhanced?*

## **Research Objectives**

These research questions contribute towards the achievement of the following research objectives:

- 1. To explore and describe the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst Leaders*
- 2. To explore and describe the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst Experts and Influencers.*
- 3. To analyse and describe the barriers and enablers to innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector.*
- 4. To discuss the enhancement of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector.*

## **Overview of Study**

### **Research Paradigm**

Given that this study sought to explore the perception about innovation in the WASPS a qualitative paradigm was adopted as the appropriate paradigm for achieving the research objectives. This research adopts constructivist ontology, an interpretive epistemology and a qualitative methodology. A phenomenological perspective was chosen to discover the essence of experience of the phenomena of innovation.

A flexible and iterative design was chosen and the data was collected in two phases. The first phase focuses on the perceptions of innovation of Leaders in the WASPS, specifically members of the SES chosen purposefully from a range of WASPS agencies. The second phase explores the perceptions of Experts and Influencers of innovation. The data collected was analysed, and the two phases synthesised together to contribute to a discussion on innovation, including strategies to enhance innovation in the sector.

Data was collected in both phases through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and analysed using a phenomenological perspective to data analysis. Findings and strategies for enhancing innovation are discussed as well as recommendations for further research. The research paradigm is detailed in chapter three and will include diagrammatical explanations.

### ***Operational Definitions***

**Leader:** For the purpose of this study a Leader is an employee in the State Public Sector who holds a substantiated Senior Executive Service position.

**CEO:** For the purposes of this study, the term CEO is the most senior Leader of the WASPS agency and includes positions such as Chief Executive Officer and Director General.

**Expert:** For the purposes of this study an expert is an individual who is recognised as a specialist in innovation, has specialized knowledge, skills and /or success regarding innovation, and is determined through networking with a variety of agencies including the non-Government sector, Small Business Development Commission, Universities, Chamber of Commerce and Industry and all levels of Government.

**Influencer:** For the purposes of this study, an influencer is an individual who is recognised as having the power to affect or influence innovation in the Western Australian Public Sector.

**Innovation:** For the purpose of this study innovation is an intentional process of turning opportunity into new and beneficial ideas and putting these into action.

**Perception:** For the purpose of this study perception includes awareness, understanding, insight, and knowledge.

**WASPS:** For the purposes of this study, WASPS refers to the Western Australian State Public Sector and includes all state Government departments, trading concerns, instrumentalities, agencies or state bodies established by or under a law of the state

### ***Significance of Research***

This study is significant in that there is currently little exploration and description of the perception of innovation in the Public Sector of Australia. There is a lack of common understanding of innovation in the WASPS. This study will enable a much greater understanding of the depth, extent and success of innovation in this sector. Innovation is vital for the creation of a more diverse and healthy economy for Western Australia. The description of innovation and guidelines for implementation will have significant implications for a responsive and developing Public Sector.

It is important when exploring and describing innovation to recognize that it also exists in products, processes, methods, and systems within the public sector. This study is significant because it recognises innovation more broadly than just from a research, science and technology basis.

In addition, this study also explores innovation from the perspective of Leaders within the public sector. There has been little research done specifically addressing the perception of senior executive Leaders within any public sector. This focus is essential because it is these Leaders who are the key decision makers and influencers of policy in the Western Australian State Public Sector. Further, the exploration of the perceptions of Experts and Influencers about innovation will further contribute to the body of knowledge about public sector innovation.

### ***Structure of the Thesis***

The thesis is structured in a way that reflects the research design. Chapter One is the introduction and background to the study and offers the rationale and context for the study, key research questions and objectives and a brief overview of the research paradigm.

Chapter Two reviews the literature on innovation in general and more specifically applied to the public sector, both internationally and in Australia. This review of the literature is conducted initially to guide the research questions and context. A more in depth literature review was conducted after data analysis to provide theoretical support to the 'emergent model'.

Chapter Three outlines the research paradigm including the choices of ontology, epistemology and methodology, and the research design. This description includes the sampling decisions and data collection methods, as well as the data analysis process. Issues relating to trustworthiness and rigour, as well as ethical considerations are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Four outlines the findings of the study. This chapter is sufficiently detailed to give the reader an understanding of the categories and themes that arise as a result of extracting meaning from the data. In this chapter reference is made to actual data from the transcripts in order to be faithful to the participant's perceptions and meaning.

Chapter Five focuses on discussions around the findings, starting with an examination of the context of the reform agenda of the WASPS. The research questions are discussed in a way which supports the iterative design of this study in relation to the themes that emerged. In this chapter, the iterative design will be apparent, firstly in the emergence of themes from the findings, including synthesis and comparison between the two phases. Theoretical sensitivity towards the themes was scrutinised with an examination of what the contemporary literature and industry knowledge said about the emerging themes. An 'emergent model' was developed from the findings. This model details strategies to enhance innovation within the WASPS.

Finally, Chapter Six will offer a brief conclusion to the study.

The following chapter will now outline the contemporary literature in the field of innovation and the public sector. This literature review will explore the formative ideas of the study, outline current literature in the area of the study and allow more meaningful development of themes from emerging categories when analyzing the data.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter seeks to review the literature about innovation and show why the research questions are important. In providing a rationale for the study, the literature review will:

- develop an understanding of the nature and structure of the topic areas of this study,
- detail the language linked to the topic on innovation including the development of an understanding of the public sector.
- position this study in its context of the Western Australian State Public Sector.

Review of the literature was undertaken constantly throughout the study, firstly to inform the research questions and secondly, to more fully develop and inform the emergent themes.

The structure of this chapter will be iterative and will follow a logical review of the fundamentals of innovation including definitions, classifications and the language of innovation. The chapter will also explore innovation in the public sector, both at State level and Commonwealth level. It will conclude with an examination of the literature concerning phenomenology and innovation.

## ***Defining Innovation***

The extent of discussion about innovation is extensive in the literature and definitions of innovation abound. The term innovation comes from the Latin *innovare* meaning

*'to make something new' (Tidd, Bassant and Pavitt, 1997, p24).*

Innovation can be viewed broadly as a process of turning opportunity into new ideas and of putting these into action. The classic definition of innovation offered by Kanter (1983) is that an innovation is a new idea involving initiating or improving a process, product or service. Much of the seminal work in the area of innovation has been summarised by Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) who define innovation as

*'An idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual. It matters little whether or not an idea is objectively new as measured by the lapse of time since its first use or discovery. If an idea seems new to the individual, it is an innovation' (p 19).*

Hussey (1997) describes an innovation as

*'a creative idea that has been made to work. An innovation may be a product, a process, a method or a system, but it is more than an idea: it has to be converted from the idea to action' (p3).*



More recent definitions concur with earlier definitions. Based on an extensive review of the innovation literature over time, Osborne and Brown (2005) have suggested that four features form the core of a definition of innovation. These four features: newness; relationship to innovation; both a process and an outcome; and change or discontinuity, have led to a proposed definition of innovation being:

*'The introduction of newness into a system usually, but not always, in relative terms and by the application (and occasional invention) of a new idea. This produces a process of transformation that brings about a discontinuity in terms of the subject itself (such as a product or service) and /or its environment (such as an organisation, market or a community)' (p 121)*

The four concepts that make up this definition will be explored in more depth later in this chapter.

Finally, in regards to defining innovation scholars as recently as this year have argued for a broad definition of innovation. These include Robbins, et al (2006) who write that innovation means

*'doing things differently, exploring new territory and taking risks' (p 25).*

This definition of innovation applies not only to technologically advanced organisations but also service industries such as the public sector. Similarly, Davidson and Griffin (2006) define innovation as

*'the managed effort of an organisation to develop new products or services or new users for existing products or services' (p 421).*

### ***Classifying Innovation***

Classifications of innovation are numerous and a general understanding of these is useful to appreciate the focus of this study. Different perspectives are detailed by Fonseca (2002). Innovation can be viewed as a key functional activity of the organisation, similar to the finance or marketing function. Fonseca (2002) believes there are many ways of examining innovation, including from the perspective of: an administrative problem; a technical process; a marketing issue; a social and political process; a cognitive and behavioural phenomenon; and an evolutionary process.

Alternatively innovation can be thought of as a key survival strategy for organisations because it enables rapid adaptation to turbulent environments (Fonseca, 2002). Through this abstract classification, innovation becomes a primary indicator of an organisation's ability to adapt to its environment.

Similarly, the early work of Cyert and March (1963) discusses the origins of innovation. This classification focuses on innovation arising because of an organisation's need to change to avoid extinction. They called this 'distress innovation'. The other extreme of this early classification of innovation is 'slack innovation'. This arises when, through an organisation's success, surplus resources are available to carry the risks of innovation.

The classifications outlined above, while useful in incorporating innovation as a key organisation activity, do little to recognise the complex environmental issues that prevail in a public sector environment. These include public pressure and political factors. Additionally, these classifications only allow for situations at either end of a continuum. The public sector frequently floats between the extremes outlined in these classifications.

Another approach to classifying innovation is based on the beneficiaries of innovation. A number of early studies have advocated for this approach (Daft and Becker, 1978; Von Hippell, 1982; Blau and Scott, 1963; Atuahene-Gima, 1996) where the perceptions of the users are most important in defining the nature of the innovation. This approach is summarised by Von Hippell (1982) who writes about the beneficiaries of innovation.

The most common classification of innovation, although not thought to be the most sophisticated is based on the outcome of innovation (Bessant and Grunt, 1985). In this classification, covering a whole spectrum of different theory, innovation is grouped according to whether it is a new product or service, or new process for producing existing products or services.

Though many authors view the outcome classification of innovation in diverse ways, a simplistic way to examine this is to see product innovation as radical innovation and process innovation as incremental innovation (Osborne and Brown, 2005). In this model, radical innovation represents

*'true discontinuity with the past and which redefines the organisational environment' (p 123)*

and redefines the organisation's products and services.

At the other extreme, incremental innovation, also called process innovation, represents

*'existing organisational competencies for more efficient production' (p 123).*

Many writers have articulated the difference between incremental and radical innovation (Quinn, 1991, Marquis, 1988 and Molyneux, 2000). For example, Molyneux (2000) offers that innovation can be defined in two ways. Firstly incremental innovation, referring to any improvements that add to existing products or processes (including organisational, financial and commercial), and secondly, radical innovation, referring to new ideas, developing or adapting new technology, or new ways of doing business.

In defining innovation in a more incremental way, Hammer (1996) believes that while innovation involves more risk than other organisational strategies it need not be a

*'venture into the wholly unknown' (p202).*

He uses the term innovation to describe the application of existing process skills to new products and services. He states that

*'even if new products and services appear quite different from existing ones, it may be that they can be delivered with slight variations of existing processes' (p 201).*

Many authors acknowledge that the process of innovation is dynamic and characterized by uncertainty (Kanter, 1988, Quinn, 1985, Polkinghorne, 1989). Whilst many scholars recognise innovation as a process, there is not always consensus about the process. Scott and Bruce (1994) for example, believe it to be a 'multistage' process, with different activities and individual behaviour at each stage. They believe that because innovation is characterized by discontinuous activities and that individuals could be involved in any of the following stages at any one time

- *Innovation begins with a problem recognition and the generation of ideas or solutions*
- *An innovative individual seeks sponsorship for an idea and attempts to build up support for the idea*
- *The innovative individual completes the idea by producing 'a prototype or model of the innovation...that can be touched or experienced, that can now be diffused, mass produced, turned to productive use or institutionalized' (Kanter, 1988, p181)*

In more traditional times, innovation was thought of as a linear process, with this view being well summarised by Mole and Elliot (1987) in the following way:

*'The innovation process typically involves a series of stages ranging from the idea of innovation, through to product design, development, production and adoption of use' (p 14).*

Equally, there are other scholars (Pelz, 1985; Clark, 1987) who believe that innovation is multi-dimensional and multi-directional.

Osborne and Brown (2005) write that whichever perspective is adopted concerning innovation as a process, that there are three dimensions involved –

*'an optimal one of invention, and two essential ones of implementation and diffusion' (p 129)*

The first dimension of innovation is that of invention which is seen as an important activity of innovation but as an optional stage. Innovation can often mean solely the application of new knowledge, rather than its invention or discovery.

The second dimension of innovation is the dimension of implementation and is somewhat more complex. It involves

*'the introduction and adaptation of a new idea within a new environment'*  
(p 129).

This dimension deserves greater explanation because of its significance in the innovation process. In regards to how the characteristics of an organisation impacts on the implementation dimension, the relationship between communication within an organisation and managerial direction, inherent in the implementation phase, needs consideration. More specifically, a hierarchical and centralized organisation is seen as more effective in the implementation dimension of innovation (Tidd, 1995; Rowe and Boise, 1974). Starkey and McKinlay (1988) also write of the importance of commitment by the organisation to innovative change, especially in the development of organisational values and culture to encourage and stimulate innovation.

Another important factor in the implementation dimension is the role of the individual in the organisation. This includes both the role of the innovation champion (Knight, 1987) and the role of the manager in providing leadership for innovation (Hage, 1990).

A factor of great relevance to innovation, particularly in the public sector, is the processes within the organisation and whether these processes are rational or political. While many scholars believe innovation to be a wholly rational process where innovation is carefully planned (Carson, 1989; Adair, 1990), there are also many who make the point that innovation is also a political process (Golden, 1990; Frost and Egri, 1991). The seminal work of Pettigrew (1973) demonstrates this point, worth quoting in full, as follows:

*'Political behaviour is likely to be a special feature of large scale innovative decisions. These decisions are likely to threaten existing patterns of resource sharing. New responses may be created and appear to fall within the jurisdiction of a department or individual who has not previously been a claimant in a particular area. This department ... may see this as an opportunity to increase it's ... status and rewards in the organisation. Those who see their interests threatened by the change may invoke resistance in the joint decision making process. In all these ways new political action is released and ultimately the existing distribution of power is endangered.'* (p 131)

Other scholars see the implementation stage of innovation being influenced more by a contingency model of implementation (Beer and Walton, 1987; Nadler, 1988) in which the emphasis is on

*'bringing rational and political processes together, dependent upon a specific environmental configuration of an organisational innovation' and one which recognises 'the need for a positive management role in the innovation process' (Osborne and Brown, 2005, p 131).*

The final dimension of the innovation process is seen as diffusion and is the means by which an innovation is transmitted from one individual or organisation to another (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971). These authors see diffusion as the pattern of awareness of new knowledge; persuasion of its proponents; testing; and final decision making.

The differences between radical (or product) and incremental (or process) innovation outlined in the literature have remained constant. Recently, Davidson and Griffin (2006) concurred that radical innovation included significant changes to products and services which were accompanied with simultaneous changes in support systems for the product or services. They also agreed that incremental innovation only included new products, services or technologies that modify existing ones.

The classifications outlined above have limitations, mostly recognising that innovation can have both a process and outcome focus. Put succinctly by Abernathy and Utterbach (1988) these classifications can obscure the fact that innovation may be a product for one organisation, which develops new work processes and a process for another which uses the process and produces another product or service. Other scholars agree that there appears to be limitations to the classifications outlined (Normann, 1991; Herbig, 1991).

A more comprehensive way of classifying innovation is advocated by Osborne and Brown (2005) who detail the classic work of Burns and Stalker (1961), more recently refined by Abernathy, Clark and Kantnow (1983), in which a typology of innovation is presented in a two dimensional way, based on

*'its impact both on the production processes of an organisation and upon the existing markets and users of a product or service' (p 125).*

This typology, to be depicted in the latter part of this chapter, appears to be more suitable for classifying innovation in the public sector because it explores the relationship between product and process innovation, as well as the processes and end users of services or products. It also recognises that organisational life is cyclical and recognises the impact of new processes, products and services on organisations.



Innovation occurs within an organisational context and there are many classifications of innovations within these organisations as seen from the literature. The main classifications will be developed in more detail within the context of public sector agencies in the following sections, on a systems approach to innovation, the capacity for innovation and the language of innovation.

### ***Systems Approach to Innovation***

A number of theoretical approaches are advocated for the study of management and organisations. Robbins, et al, (2006) outline three. Firstly, a process approach where the functions of planning, organising, leading and controlling dominate the framework within which phenomenon such as innovation can be studied. It can be argued that this is a simplistic approach to understanding innovation within a public sector context. The second theoretical approach suggested by Robbins is the contingency approach. This approach proposes that situational variables are recognised and responded to as they arise. Whilst this approach more aptly identifies the variables that affect managerial actions and organisational performance, it still lacks the comprehensiveness needed in this study. Finally the third theoretical approach is the systems approach which

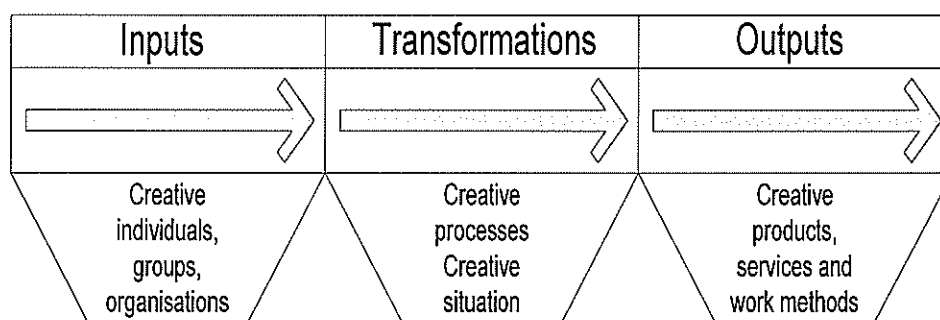
*'recognises the interdependency of internal organisational activities, and the organisation and its external environment' (p 54).*

The systems approach better recognises the context of the public sector. Many scholars acknowledge the importance of a systems approach in the study of innovation (Prather and Gundry, 1995; and Humphrey, 1997). A definition of innovation by Prather and Gundry (1995) supports the systems approach where they argue that

*'the implementation of viable business ideas that result from an organisation's creativity-supporting culture and structures' (p 12).*

More recent literature also supports these earlier studies. Ortt and Smitts (2006) for example, explain that innovation is an activity in a multilevel system and that one of the clear trends in innovation management is the recognition of the systems approach.

The literature indicates support for a systems approach when studying public sector agencies. A systems approach ensures recognition of all interdependent factors, such as barriers and enablers, within a complex system and will allow insight into the 'what' and 'how' of public sector innovation. Glor (2001) suggests that an open system approach is considered an appropriate framework for understanding the dynamics of innovation in organisations because the approach considers the relationship among people, structures and ideas at work in the organisation. The following diagram, adapted from Robbins, et al, (2006) summarises the systems approach to innovation, consistent with that adopted by this study.



**Figure 1: A Systems Approach to Innovation (adapted from Robbins, et al, 2006, P 373)**

## ***Capacity for Innovation***

There is significant literature about the innovative capacity of organisations. Most of the literature indicates that organisational structure, culture and human resource factors, such as leadership capability are the main enablers for innovation.

Early studies regarding organisational structures supportive of innovation indicate that mechanistic organisational structures are most suitable for stable conditions and organic structures are more adaptable and thus more innovative (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Thompson, 1965). More recent works argue that the ability of organisations to be more innovative varies over time, dependent upon their needs and their environment (Aitken and Hage, 1974; Osborne and Brown, 2005).

The organisation's capacity to innovate is also influenced by the 'culture' of the organisation with the recognition that for successful innovation, a supportive culture is paramount (Robbins, et al, 2006). Aspects of this culture seen as supporting innovation include freedom of employees to exercise discretion and take initiative, an environment of trust and openness, the generation of ideas and reward for risk taking (Simpson, 2001).

The importance of organisational culture in the promotion of innovation is succinctly stated by Jelinek and Schoonhoven (1990) who write

*'A strategy for innovation is contained, not in plans, but in the pattern of commitments, decisions, approaches and persistent behaviours that facilitated doing new things' (p 203)*

Also of significance in the organisation's capacity to innovate is the human resource capability of the organisation, particularly those involving leadership capabilities. Osborne and Brown (2005) suggest that

*'there is little dispute in the literature that senior management commitment to innovation is a key factor in innovative organisations' (p 134).*

As discussed previously and now expanded, the role of innovation champions within an organisation is important in its capacity to innovate. This role is not necessarily that of a formal leader within the organisation, but rather one who supports an innovation at its early stages of development

*'even when it does not seem to accord with the strategic direction of the organisation' (Osborne and Brown, 2005, p 135).*

Similarly, Robbins, et al, (2006) describes these employees as 'ideas champions' and define these people as

*'individuals who actively and enthusiastically support new ideas, build support, overcome resistance and ensure that innovations are implemented' (p 434).*

Furthermore, they summarise research which articulates the qualities of 'champions' of innovation including that they:

- *Actively support new ideas and overcome resistance*
- *Have high self confidence, energy, persistence*
- *have a tendency towards risk taking*
- *Display characteristics of dynamic leadership*
- *Inspire others with their vision, and*

- *Have roles that provide considerable decision making discretion (p 434).*

Within the realms of the human resource capabilities of an organisation is the educational and professional level of the staff. This is seen in the literature as being an important factor in enabling innovation (Doudeyns and Hayman, 1993; Iwamura and Jog, 1991; Aiken and Hage, 1971). Inherent in the educational and professional capabilities of employees within an organisation is their capability to learn and accommodate within their thinking, the concept of the learning organisation. Learning organisations are ones that are described as encouraging dialogue among workers and managers, which stimulate new and creative ways of doing and thinking, and that thrive on individuals who challenge themselves as well as the system (Sarros and Butchatsky, 1996). The concept of the learning organisation was first developed by Senge (1990) who argues that organisations should not simply react to observed problems, but should understand the systemic causes of the problem and address these causes. This concept promoted the importance of learning ability in organisational adaptability and ongoing success, both importance ingredients of strategic value.

De Geus (1997) and Hubbard (2004) both agree that learning is necessary for knowledge to be created and for innovation to occur, and that knowledge leads to learning and the potential for further innovation. This concept is especially important for the public sector because of the need to respond to public demand and different political agendas. One of the challenges of the public sector is to have a capacity to learn, adapt and innovate in the midst of constantly changing conditions, knowledge and technologies.

### ***The Language of Innovation***

A number of terms are used synonymously with innovation. In much of the literature the terms innovation and entrepreneurship are used interchangeably. For example, Bartol, Tein, Matthews and Martin (2005) write that the innovation process is

*'closely related to the entrepreneurial role, as this role relates to finding and exploiting new opportunities', (p 16).*

Entrepreneurship is the process in which individuals pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control and the essence of this behaviour is very similar to innovation, that is, identifying opportunities and putting useful ideas into practice (Baringer and Ireland, 2006; Ireland, Hitt and Sirmon, 2003).

Creativity is also used as a term synonymous with that of innovation, described by Hussey (1997) as being close relatives. He writes however, that they are not the same thing and in most organisations, there are many creative ideas that never move into the action phase, that is, do not become innovations. West and Farr (1990) believed that the distinction between creativity and innovation may be one of emphasis rather than substance. However, Scott and Bruce (1994) succinctly outline the differences that other scholars have made between creativity and innovation, as follows

*'Creativity has to do with the production of novel and useful ideas (Mumford and Gustafson, 1988), and innovation has to do with the production or adoption of useful ideas and idea implementation (Kanter, 1988, Van deVen, 1986). Although creativity is often framed as 'doing something for the first time anywhere or creating knowledge' (Woodman, Sawyer and Griffin, 1993, 293), innovation also encompasses the adaptation of products or processes from outside an organisation' (p 582)*

The difference between creativity and innovation is outlined by Robbins, Bergman, Stagg and Coulter (2006) who write that creativity is

*'the ability to combine ideas in a unique way or to make unusual associations between ideas' and that innovation is the 'process of taking a creative idea and turning it into a useful product, service or method of operation' (p 431).*

They therefore propose that the innovative organisation is characterized by its ability to channel creativity into useful outcomes and that when discussion occurs about changing an organisation to make it more creative, it usually means to stimulate innovation. This subtle form of difference will be followed in this study.

A literature review on innovation would be incomplete without the explicit recognition that the literature does not offer a single theory which fully explains the complexities of innovation. This is summarised succinctly by Osborne and Brown (2005) who write that

*'the act of innovation is a nexus of a number of heterogeneous elements. To try to bring all of these within the realms of one theory, stretches the credibility of our bounded rationality' (p 140).*

In regards to innovation in the public sector, which will now be discussed, any consideration of the existing literature must recognise the situational factors which influence innovation within the context of public sector with its complex environmental influences.

### ***Innovation and the Public Sector***

The first part of this chapter examined the literature about defining and classifying innovation, a systems approach to understanding innovation, an organisation's capacity for innovation and the language of innovation. This section focuses on innovation within a public sector context and examines how the concepts already discussed 'fit' with the public sector.

Glor (1997) believes that Governments often assume the mantle of innovation without actually adopting its real substance, in order to avoid any real and meaningful change to existing paradigms within the sector. In adopting a broad mantle of innovation, such as that advocated by (Zhuang, 1995) to include improving existing processes or dissemination of new ideas activities or ideas, she believes that the risk is that these would never bring about a change to the existing paradigm.

The difficulties of innovation in the public sector are outlined by Altshuler and Behn (1997) who write about how innovation is at odds with the accountability of bureaucracies to higher political authorities. This dilemma is made worse by the public sector's adherence to rules, maintenance of established routines, due process and accountability (Goodsell, 1993; Altshuler and Behn, 1997).

Elected politicians make policy, and bureaucrats are required to implement the policy without unreasonably stretching the power limits of discretion. Lynn (in Altshuler and Behn, 1970) writes that



*'a fundamental conflict arises between, on the one hand, innovation which required autonomy, decentralisation, risk taking, and unprogrammed tasks, and, on the other hand, accountability, which requires predictability, standardisation, replicability and stability' (p 99).*

Because of these bureaucratic restrictions, innovation by leaders in the public sector can therefore be a difficult and risky undertaking.

More recent works agree with these thoughts. Vigoda-Gadol, Shoham, Schwabsky and Ruvio (2005) write that the bureaucracies of the public sector are more comfortable with conservative work patterns, strict rules and methods which have proven successful in the past. There is, therefore, a reluctance to implement new techniques and ideas which appear risky. These scholars point out that many of the values associated with bureaucracy such as hierarchy, specialisation and impersonality, stand in sharp contrast to the flexibility, adaptability, creativity and risk taking we associate with innovation in modern organisations.

The concepts concerning innovation in the public sector, outlined so far, are succinctly illustrated by the significant body of literature by Borins. His series of studies (1998, 2000, 2001, 2002) concluded that public sector innovation was difficult because of poor incentives to innovate and a tendency for risk aversity, because of the drastic consequences of unsuccessful innovation.

A classic piece of work in the Borin's suit produced characteristics of successful public sector innovation as well as a set of principles to guide public sector innovation. These are summarised by Osborne and Brown (2005) in pointing out that the characteristics of successful innovations are the use of systems approach; the use of new technology; process improvement; the involvement of private / voluntary bodies in public services and the empowerment of citizens. Further, the guidelines offered for the management of innovation in the public service include

- *'Support of a culture of innovation from the top of it*
  - *Increase rewards for innovation*
  - *Establish an innovation fund to support innovative projects*
  - *Encourage diversity inside the organisation, in order to engender differential perspectives on issues*
  - *Use information effectively*
  - *Draw on ideas from staff at all organisational levels*
  - *Value experimentation – and learn from it'*
- (p 145).

An important consideration for any study of innovation in the public sector is clarity in differentiating genuine innovation from ascribed innovation. Osborne and Brown (2005) suggest that the term innovation is often used

*'in a pejorative and normative sense' with 'lax' definitions of innovation ascribed to public sector innovation' (p 150).*



This typology is a useful reference in this study mostly because it allows innovation to be more clearly delineated from incremental organisational development. The typology also demonstrates that in all three innovation classifications, discontinuity is an important component of innovation and is clearly an important factor in classifying a development as an innovation.

### **Innovation and Government**

Governments are constantly faced with changing circumstances where old solutions no longer work. There is much rhetoric about innovation by Governments in Australia. The Commonwealth Government has introduced a commitment to innovation through its Backing Australia's Ability policy, launched in 2001 and still a current policy (Commonwealth Government of Australia, 2001). This policy aims to promote research, development and innovation and includes strategies targeting business innovation, higher education research and training and technological advances. This policy states that innovation is 'generating new ideas and bringing them to life as innovative and exciting new Australian products, processes, services and businesses'. This policy focuses on innovation as research, science and technology.

Similarly, the State Government in Western Australia launched its 'Innovate WA' policy following the last State Government election in 2000. This policy, also still current, was driven by several factors including that Australia's investment in innovation and research and development has been declining for several years. The key objective of the Innovate WA policy is to create diversity in the economy rather than to enhance innovation in the public sector; however, the policy does provide some guidance for innovation. The many advantages of increasing the research and development capability of Western Australia, including the development of new knowledge industries and the application of knowledge to mainstream existing industries, are outlined in the policy. The policy states that ideas, innovation and initiative are the keys to achieving this and that research and development can:

- *Create new jobs and increase investment in Western Australia,*
- *Lead to the identification of new markets and products,*
- *Lead to a more efficient production methods, leading to increased product quality and increased efficiency, and*
- *Enhance the State's ability to produce a skilled and innovative labour force.*

Many reform initiatives have contributed to innovation within the WASPS. These initiatives will be summarised in the initial sections of the discussion chapter in order to inform the context of this study.

Similarly to the Commonwealth Government, the Western Australian State Government policy (Western Australian State Government, 2001) emphasizes innovation in the narrower research and development perspective. In comparison with the Commonwealth and State Government policy on innovation, this study takes on a much broader definition of innovation, being an intentional process of turning opportunity into new and beneficial ideas and putting these into action. This broader perspective of innovation will allow innovation to include creative ideas, such as a product, process, method or system, which has been made to work.

### ***Phenomenology, Innovation and the Public Sector***

Fonseca (2002) believes that innovation leads to new ways of doing things and to new solutions to the problem of resource scarcity. He writes that regardless of whether innovation is thought of as a hard scientific and technological process, a rational management process, or a soft intuitive human process, all perspectives have in common the assumption that innovation is a phenomenon that can be subjected to human control. This definition takes for granted that people can purposefully design the conditions under which innovation will occur.

If innovation is recognised as a phenomenon subjected to human control then a research methodology which gives appropriate recognition to this is important. Phenomenology offers this recognition and has had a positive influence on public administration practice and research. Waugh and Waugh (2004) write, in reference to public administration, that

*'Phenomenology has significantly influenced the literature and language of the field, in addition to theory, research and practice. As a practical matter, phenomenological reasoning encourages attention to how people relate to bureaucratic organisations and government programs, as well as each other' (p 424).*

The literature about phenomenology as a research approach is diverse and not contentious-free. Its application to the public sector is not extensive but still however has credibility. Larkin, Watts and Clifton (2006) write about the importance of phenomenology in its requirement to

*'understand and 'give voice' to the concerns of participants; and the interpretative requirements to contextualise and 'make sense' of these claims and concerns (p 102) ... and to emphasise the experiential claims and concerns of the persons taking part in the study' (p104).*

In a study of innovation in the public sector, this requirement is of vital importance firstly, to explore and understand the participant's world of the public sector and their experiences of innovation within that sector. Secondly, and of equal importance is the consideration of the context, which is a dimension that the phenomenological approach emphasizes and one that is important in the complex context of the WA state public sector. The benefits of using a phenomenological approach in studies where context is important is well defined in the literature (Rennie, 1999; Smith and Osborne, 2003; Larkin, et al, 2006). This is described well in the following ways

*'Phenomenology as a study of persons-in-context' (Larkin, et al, 2006, p 105)*

*'... a compelling argument that it is impossible to ignore the subjectivizing influences of language, culture, ideology, expectations, or assumptions ... makes the human individual a part of reality, rather than an ego dualistically separated from the world' (Rennie, 1999, p 6).*

The literature on phenomenology offers advice about its application and potential to add meaning and justification to this study. For example, in applying the principles outlined by Larkin, et al, (2006) the study will explore how the phenomenon of innovation in the WASPS has been understood by Leaders, Experts and Influencers; what does innovation mean to these participants in the context of the WASPS; and what is the

*'participant's own relatedness to and engagement with' (p 117)*

the phenomenon of innovation.



Likewise, Morcol (2005) recognises the potential of phenomenology in addressing the aspect of public administration that scientific theories of management (such as the Weberian model of bureaucracy, neoclassical economics and Newtonian science) do not always recognise. Specifically, this author makes reference to phenomenology supporting the notion of an open systems approach to the public sector, previously discussed in this chapter. He writes that

*'the universe, for most part, is indeterministic; most systems of the universe are open systems and they tend toward disequilibrium' (p 17).*

The professional actions of public servants are critical in facilitating innovation. Forester (1990) proposes that phenomenological inquiry is crucial in enabling an understanding of

*'the practices, strategies, judgments and competencies involved in producing those outcomes – in the past or in the future' (p 64).*

It should be noted that this study does not propose that phenomenology is the only approach of benefit in the study of innovation in the public sector, rather that the phenomena of innovation does not lend itself to being studied by traditional scientific research methods. For example, positivism may have a limited role to play in the study of innovation in a public sector setting with this approach producing only a narrow view of innovation in the WASPS. Waugh and Waugh (2004) write that positivists

*'take social reality for granted and ... dismiss as unreal and unobservable the meaning of human activity ... deny their subjectivity, hiding behind objective measuring devices borrowed from natural science ... miss the essence or meaning of what they are trying to observe' (p 413).*

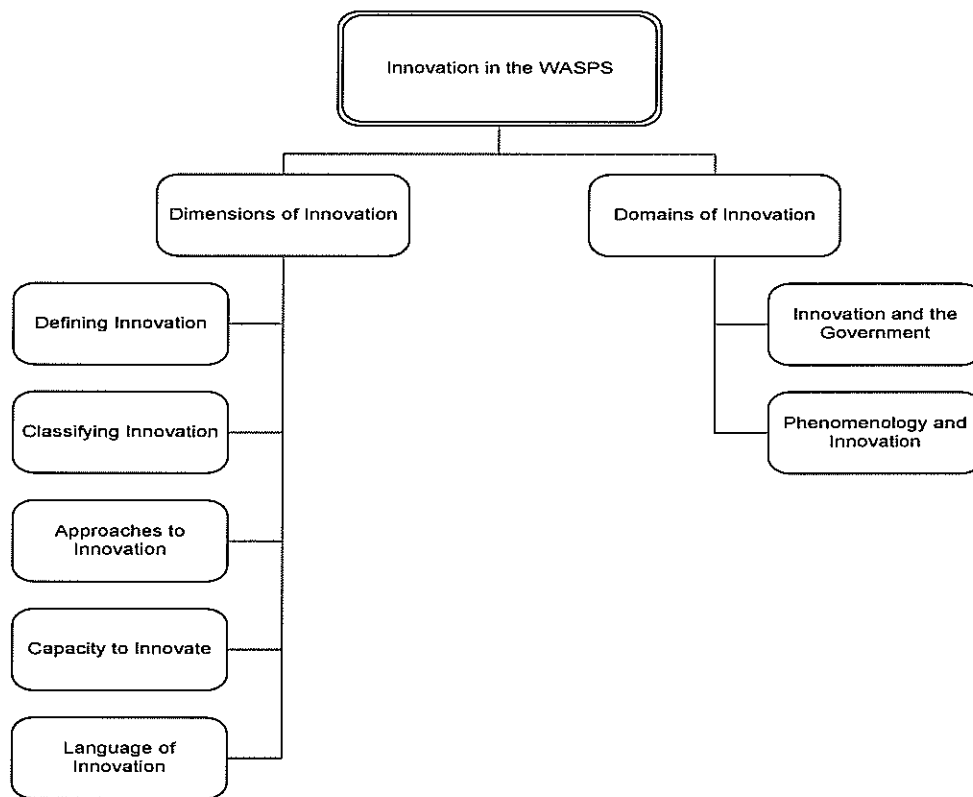
In contrast, phenomenology

*'offers a way to systematically study and learn about phenomena that are typically difficult to observe' (Wilding and Whiteford, 2005, p 99).*

Given the scope of this study, other approaches incorporating ethical, political-economic and psychological considerations will be suggested as potential future studies in innovation.

### **Summary**

This literature review has detailed the relevant literature on innovation, including accepted definitions; the exploration of innovation in the abstract, as a process and a phenomenon; and the relationship between creativity and entrepreneurship. An outline of innovation in the public sector is offered, including discussion about the policy framework of innovation and the State and Commonwealth Government. Figure three summarises the areas covered in the literature review.



**Figure 3: Outline of Literature Review**

To conclude and keep in harmony with the qualitative methodology, avoiding pre-conceived ideas which may distance the voice of respondents, this review seeks only to explore formative ideas of the study. This will ensure sufficient knowledge of the literature in the area of study and to allow more meaningful development of themes from emerging categories when analyzing the data. A more in-depth review of the literature will take place at the data analysis and discussion phase of this study. The next chapter will discuss the research paradigm in support of the methodological choices of the researcher.

## Chapter Three: Research Paradigm and Design

### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the research paradigm for the study and to provide justification for the chosen paradigm, with reference to the ontological and epistemological perspective and the methodology chosen. The research design will then be discussed.

This study adopts a qualitative approach exploring the meaning given by Leaders, Experts and Influencers and their perception of innovation in that sector. This approach will provide rich meaning to the following research questions:

- 1. What are the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst Leaders?*
- 2. What are the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst Experts and Influencers?*
- 3. What are the barriers and enablers to innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector*
- 4. How can innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector be enhanced?*

## Research Paradigm

All researchers are guided by principles, which shape how they see the world and act within it. This set of principles can be termed the paradigm, sometimes called an interpretive framework, a basic set of beliefs that guides action (Guba, 1990). Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) definition of paradigm demonstrates how the researcher is guided in the study:

*'the basic belief system on world view that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method, but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways' (pg 106).*

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) believe that in defining inquiry paradigms, that basic beliefs can be summarized by responses to three fundamental and interconnected questions, as follows:

- 1. The ontological question: What is the form and nature of reality, and what can therefore be known about it?*
- 2. The epistemological question: What is the nature of the relationship between the knower and the would-be-knower and what can be known?*
- 3. The methodological question: How can the inquirer (would be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known? (p 108).*

To better understand the paradigm that best fits the focus of the study the following section will cover a detailed discussion of each of this study's ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions.

## **Ontology**

The ontology of a study describes

*'the nature of reality' (Creswell, 1998, p76)*

and similarly asks

*'what is the form and nature of reality and what can therefore be known about it?' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p108).*

This study will focus on the reality constructed by the participants involved in the research situation. The ontological question is about the 'reality' as it applies to the phenomena of innovation in the WASPS. This study focuses on the different perceptions of Leaders, Experts and Influencers of innovation in the WASPS. There will be multiple realities involved in this study including that of the researcher and the researched. A constructivist ontology is therefore appropriate for this study.

## **Epistemology**

The epistemology of any study asks

*'what is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?' (Creswell, 1998, p76).*

This study aims to explore and describe the phenomenon of innovation in the WASPS. In the study, the researcher will interact with the participants, being Leaders, Experts and Influencers, through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The study is therefore interpretive and will explore and describe the phenomena of innovation in the WASPS as perceived by the respondents. As recommended by Guba and Lincoln (2000), the researcher minimised the distance between herself and the participants in the study to ensure that the phenomena of innovation was fully explored.

## **Methodology**

As previously stated, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994) the methodological question asks

*'how can the inquirer go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known' (p 108).*

Given the ontological and epistemological considerations, a qualitative methodology is appropriate for this study. The qualitative methodology assumes an inductive logic, with categories of meaning emerging from the participant's perception of innovation in the WASPS. This emergence provides

*'rich context bound information leading to patterns or theories that help explain a phenomenon' (Creswell, 1998, p 7).*

Given the paradigm for this study, the researcher identified a theoretical perspective to guide the data collection and analysis, closely associated with the choice of the qualitative paradigm. The choice of a perspective is central to qualitative methodology and as outlined by Taylor and Bogdan (1998) determines what qualitative methodologists study, how they study it and how they interpret it. A phenomenological perspective was adopted for this study and the following section provides an outline of this perspective.

### ***Phenomenology***

Phenomenology as a philosophy is

*'concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them and how in particular the philosopher should bracket out preconceptions in his or her grasp of the world' (Bryman, 2004, p13).*

The originator of the term phenomenology, Alfred Schutz, was influenced by Weber's concept of 'Verstehen', and by the writings of the philosopher, Husserl (Bryman, 2004). Schutz illustrates the relevance of phenomenology in the following way, worth quoting in full:



*“The world of nature as explored by the natural scientist does not mean anything to molecules, atoms and electrons. But the observational field of the social scientists, social reality, has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the beings living, acting, thinking within it. By a series of common sense constructs they have pre-selected and pre-interpreted the world which they experience as the reality of their daily lives. It is these thought objects of theirs which determine their behaviour by motivating it. The thought objects constructed by the social scientist, in order to grasp social reality, have been founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common sense thinking of men, living their daily life within the social world’ (Schutz, 1962, p59).*

In terms of Schultz’s philosophy to the research setting, a number of conclusions can be drawn from the application of the phenomenological stance to this study and the research setting. Firstly, Schultz’s work reinforces the need for the researcher to recognise that social reality has a meaning for human beings and therefore human action is meaningful (Bryman, 2004). Secondly, it is important for the researcher to gain access to the participants thinking and to interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view.

These points are made by Taylor and Bogdan (1998) who write that a phenomenological perspective views human behaviour, what people say and do, as a product of how people define their world. Patton (1990) writes that

*‘phenomenological inquiry focuses on the question: what is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomena for these people?’ (p69).*

He describes that

*‘we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness’ (p 69)..*

Similarly, phenomenology is described by Moustakas (1994) as determining

*'what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. From the individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived, in other words, the essences of structures of the experience' (p 13).*

The design of this study therefore supports the selection of a phenomenological perspective.

An important point is that conducting a study with a phenomenological perspective is different from using phenomenology to philosophically justify the methods of qualitative inquiry as legitimate in social science research. This study uses a phenomenological perspective to focus on descriptions of

*'what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience' (Patton, 1990, p69).*

Specifically the study focuses on the perceptions of innovation in the WASPS, that is the experiences of Leaders, Experts and Influencers of innovation in this sector. In any phenomenological study such as this, it is important that the researcher facilitates the full essence of the phenomena (of innovation) to be discovered. To be effective in this requires both a change of attitude and 'bracketing' by the researcher. Bracketing in this study refers to 'placing one's own thoughts about the topic in suspense or out of question' (Lichtman, 2006, p72). This important consideration is discussed later in this chapter in terms of Epoche and phenomenological reduction.

Support for the phenomenological perspective arises from Creswell (1998) who writes that as a method, phenomenology involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning. The researcher's use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews of a sample determined via a purposeful sampling protocol is supported by this perspective.

The following section outlines the theory of qualitative research to further support the researcher's methodological choice.

### ***Qualitative Research***

A definition of qualitative research is offered by Denzin and Lincoln (2003) as research that is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of

*'a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to self'. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural environment, 'attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them'*  
(p 3).

Qualitative research implies an emphasis on meaning that is not measured in terms of quantity or intensity.

*'Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape enquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value laden nature of inquiry.'* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p 8).

Similarly, Creswell (1998) defines a qualitative study as

*'inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting'* (pg 2).

Inductive logic was adopted for this study, with context bound information emerging to help explain the phenomena of innovation. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) suggest many good reasons for the appropriateness of qualitative methodology for a study such as this.

Firstly, qualitative research is concerned with the meaning people attach to things in their life. This allows the researcher to understand people from their own frame of reference and reality as they experience it. Secondly, qualitative research allows the development of concepts, insights, and understandings from patterns in the data rather than collecting data to assess preconceived models, hypotheses, or theories. The inductive nature is suitable for research into the phenomena of innovation.

Many different approaches are possible to study innovation in the public sector, including a qualitative or quantitative paradigm, or even a combination of both. Creswell (1998) offers a number of criteria to justify the adoption of a qualitative paradigm. In adapting these to this study, the researcher is able to justify the ontological, epistemological and methodological choices already outlined in the chapter so far and demonstrate that a qualitative paradigm is appropriate for this study. This justification is included in the following table which is adapted from Creswell (1998, p9).

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Qualitative Paradigm</b>
The researcher's worldview	The researcher believes that reality is subjective and sought to have a close interaction with participants through semi-structured, in-depth interviews.  In addition, the researcher has comfort with the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of the qualitative paradigm, arising from previous research and studies
The training and experience of researcher	The researcher has prior experience in qualitative writing, exploration of qualitative literature and experience with qualitative research data management software
The researcher's psychological attributes	The researcher is comfortable with a lack of rules and procedures for conducting research and has a high tolerance for ambiguity
The nature of the problem	The researcher felt that 'innovation' is best studied in a way that allows greater understanding of the phenomena and of the meaning given to this phenomenon by participants.
The audience for the study	The researcher believes that the qualitative paradigm is one which will be understood by participants and readers of the study.

**Figure 4: Justification of Qualitative Research Paradigm (Adapted from Creswell, 1994, P9)**

Included in Creswell's works regarding qualitative research, he also offered more specific criteria that can be applied to the specifics of this study (Creswell, 2003).

1. Qualitative research takes place in the natural setting: In this study the researcher went to the participant's office or a location chosen by them to conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews. This enabled participants to feel comfortable and the researcher to understand the context in which the research is situated.
2. Qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly configured: The researcher allowed many themes to emerge during the interviews, including the changing and re defining of questions as new themes arose.
3. Qualitative Research is fundamentally interpretive: In this study the researcher allowed new categories to emerge freely as she analyzed the data and this was interpreted through her 'personal lens' brought to the qualitative analysis.
4. The qualitative researcher views the social phenomena holistically. In studying innovation in the WASPS, the researcher took a broad view of the phenomena as a whole, rather than, for example, an analysis of only research and technological based innovation.
5. The qualitative researcher systematically reflects on who she is in the inquiry and her own personal biography: In this study the researcher acknowledges that she has biases about her perception of innovation in the WASPS and while recognising that inquiry is value laden, has been honest about these biases.

This chapter aims to justify both the choice of research paradigm and the research design. Having concluded that constructivist ontology, an interpretative epistemology and a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological perspective is appropriate for this study of public sector innovation and the appropriate research design is detailed below.

**Research Design**

The study is designed to explore and describe the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector, the researcher ensured that the study was conducted in a systematic way and that the design was flexible and iterative to enable the ‘true’ perceptions to surface. The research design ensured that there was a logical sequence connecting the research questions to the research conclusions. The figure below provides a summary of the main phases of the study each of which will be described in greater detail.

1. Initial Literature Review	
2. Preliminary Interviews and Finalising of Interview Questions and Protocol	
3.1 Phase One	3.2 Phase Two
3.1.1 Sample (Leaders)	3.2.1 Sample (Experts and Influencers)
3.1.2 Data Collection	3.2.2 Data Collection
4. Data Analysis	
5. Synthesis of Perceptions of Leaders with Experts and Influencers	
6. Additional Literature Review For Theoretical Sensitivity	
7. Synthesis of Emergent Themes	

**Figure 5: Summary of Research Design**

## **Initial Literature Review**

The initial literature review was conducted only to explore the formative ideas of the study. Glasser (1992) justifies the use of a literature review at this stage of the study, firstly, to ensure that the researcher has sufficient knowledge of the literature in the area of study and secondly to allow more meaningful development of themes from emerging categories when analyzing the data. Whiteley (2002) suggests that only important literature be reviewed, including writings that are not only central to the issue but also connected, and that bracketing be applied to literature and theory to ensure that the researcher is not contaminating the research process and findings. An additional aim of this initial literature review was to assist the researcher in formulating the questions used in the interviews for data collection.

## **Preliminary Interviews**

The researcher conducted two preliminary interviews with the aim of refining the questions needed for the interviews. Questions posed in this preliminary phase were directed towards encouraging all participants to explore their perceptions of innovation, with the aim being to allow the participant's meaning and perspective to emerge (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) write that there are many benefits in researchers undertaking this background work. They refer to this work as stretching exercises and write that this allows the researcher to practice interview, observation, writing, reflection, and artistic skills to refine their research instruments, which are the researchers themselves. The two preliminary interviews were analysed and a set of questions and protocols to guide the interviews were formulated.



## Sampling

A purposeful selection of participants was appropriate for this study to ensure that the respondents had experienced the phenomena under study. Whiteley (2002) defines a 'purposive' sample as one in which the respondent groups have an intuitive connection with the issues being studied. Applied to this study, this meant that participants had to be able to provide a rich description of their perception of innovation in the WASPS. Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed sixteen typologies for purposeful sampling. From his typology, 'criterion' sampling was adopted for this study, as it was essential that all participants had experienced the phenomenon of innovation within the WASPS.

To achieve the research objectives the research sample was different for each of the two phases of the research. The research population for the first phase of the study was drawn from all Leaders within the Western Australian Public Sector who occupied a Senior Executive Service (SES) position. The research population for the second phase of the study was drawn from Experts and Influencers of innovation in the WASPS. These samples will now be described in full.

In phase one of this study, members of the SES were invited to participate. Purposeful selection with an emphasis on criterion sampling (Creswell, 1998) was appropriate because the study is phenomenological in nature. The selection of participants was facilitated through direct contact by the researcher with members of the Senior Executive Service. While this criterion included all those employees of the Western Australian State Public Sector occupying a level 9, Class 1 to 4, or a Group 1 to 4 positions, for this study the researcher selected those SES members at the top and second tier of Management, i.e. Director General, Chief Executive Officer or Executive Director level. The sampling selection attempted to have representation from all areas of the Western Australian State Public Sector were represented.

In phase two of the study, participants were drawn from a pool of Experts in innovation and Influencers of innovation. As in phase one, this 'criterion' sampling (Creswell, 1998) was appropriate for this phase and participants were selected through networking with a variety of agencies including the non-Government sector, Small Business Development Commission, Universities, Chamber of Commerce and Industry and all levels of Government. The aim was to secure participants who were recognised as specialists in innovation having specialized knowledge, skills and /or success regarding innovation, or as an Influencer, recognised as having the power to affect innovation in the Western Australian Public Sector.

## **Data Collection**

### **Interviews**

Data for this study was collected using the interview as the main data collection method with the researcher providing participants with the greatest opportunity to explore and describe the phenomena of innovation. There are many types of interviews that can be used in qualitative research, and these types are described extensively in the literature (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, Denzin, 1978, Marshal and Rossman, 1996). Taylor and Bogdan (1998) write that the interview is well justified for use when the researcher seeks to understand the

*'perceptions of participants or learning how participants come to attach certain meaning to phenomena or events' (p 98).*

The researcher felt that the choice of the semi structured, in-depth interview as a tool in this type of study is appropriate and defensible given the objectives of this study.

Data was collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews in both phase one and two of this study and this method allowed for the spontaneous flow of information and interaction and enabled maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appeared to be appropriate.

The semi structured or 'semi standardized' interview used in this study is described by Berg (2001) as

*'the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and special topics. These questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewers are allowed freedom to digress, that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardized questions' (p 70).*

Semi structured, in-depth interviews help to uncover the participant's understanding and perception of innovation. Marshall and Rossman (1995) point out that an assumption fundamental to qualitative research is that the participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it. The most important aspect of the interviewer's approach is to convey an attitude of acceptance that the participant's information was valuable and useful.

Irrespective of the type of method used, the interview is well recognised as an important tool for data collection in qualitative research (Creswell, 1998: Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: Glaser and Strauss, 1967). It is however, not without its limitations. Marshall and Rossman (1995) outline some limitations that will now be discussed with reference to how the researcher overcame these limitations. Firstly it is recognised that

*'interviews involve personal interactions; cooperation is essential. Interviewees may be unwilling or uncomfortable sharing all that the interviewer hopes to explore' (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p81).*

The researcher spent time with the interviewees prior to recording the interview, getting to know them and reassuring the participants about confidentiality and the importance of the study. The researcher did not, on any occasion, experience reluctance on the part of participants to openly and honestly discuss their perceptions of innovation, even when the information they provided was negative about themselves or their agencies.

Another limitation identified by Marshall and Rossman, (1995) is

*'the interviewer may not ask questions that evoke long narratives from participants either because of lack of expertise or familiarity with local language or because of lack of skill' (p 81) .*

As an experienced manager and academic, the researcher is well versed and experienced in the art of interviewing, and ensured that the research questions were open and stimulating. The researcher also has significant experience in the public sector and therefore understood the research context, and the language of the public sector.

In the second phase, the researcher interviewed 'Experts and Influencers' as previously defined. These participants fitted the definition by Marshall and Rossman (1995) as being 'elite' interviewees as they are considered to be influential and well informed about the particular area being researched, in this case, innovation in the WASPS. The researcher did not experience any of the usual constraints of time and scheduling in accessing these participants and found that they were very familiar with the context and phenomena of innovation in the study and willing to discuss their perceptions.

It is vital that the participants in a research interview feel that they are listened to. The researcher practiced exceptional listening skills during these interviews. Whilst it is recognised that this is important, the

*'interviewees' principal concerns focus upon what will become of the interview' (Miller and Glassner, in Silverman, 2004, p 131).*

The researcher reassured participants not only about confidentiality concerns but also that their input would contribute to the collation of strategies to enhance innovation in the WASPS. In addition, the researcher offered to present the finding of the study to the participants and/or their workplace when the study was complete.

### **Interview 'Ritual'**

Prior to conducting the interview, the researcher had undertaken a number of important steps. Informed consent was sought from all participants and this included seeking permission from the participants to be interviewed, explaining the purpose of the interview and study both by letter to participants and through discussions on the phone and by email. In addition a convenient time was secured with participants directly or with their personal assistants and a location of the interview determined as well as the best way to arrive at the predetermined place on time. As the researcher was also working full time at the time of interviewing participants, organisational skills and time management were vital aspects of the data collection process for this study.

Upon meeting with the participant, the researcher would make every effort to create an atmosphere of comfort for the interviewee. Interestingly, perhaps because of the professional seniority of the participants, all participants went out of their way to make the researcher comfortable, given that the interviews took place in the participants 'territory'. Once a level of comfort and rapport was established, the researcher was vigilant in ensuring that she discussed all relevant matters with the participants before commencing the recording. To achieve consistency in this matter the researcher had a check list and assured the participants that this list was for her benefit making sure she didn't omit any important points. The issues included on this prompt sheet related to the following:

- A more in-depth outline of the topic and scope of the study than given in previous correspondence.
- A description of the phases of data collection
- A reminder that the study was conducted through the Graduate Business School of Curtin University of Technology, and that it was appropriately supervised. The names and contact details of the supervisors were given to the participants.
- A reassurance that the study was approved by the University's ethics and research committees
- A reminder that the participation of the interviewees was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw for the study at any time throughout the interview.
- An explanation that the interview will be recorded, and then transcribed and analysed by the researcher
- A reassurance that the results will be described in general terms only, with no names or agencies given.
- An offer that when the study was complete findings will be made available to the participants if requested

- A determination of whether the participants had any questions that they wished to be answered before the interview commenced.
- A complete list of the contact details of the researcher including work, university, email and mobile contact details.

### **Interview Questions**

The following questions were asked, after they were refined after the preliminary interviews. It should be noted that the researcher, through the semi-structured, in-depth interview process, allowed participants to explore points of relevance, outside the interview structure, when appropriate.

#### **Phase One: (Leaders)**

- 1. Please describe your understanding and perception of innovation in the public sector?*
- 2. How important is innovation in your role in the public sector?*
- 3. What are the barriers to innovation for your department, and the wider public sector?*
- 4. What are the enablers to innovation for your department, and the wider public sector?*
- 5. Please describe an example of innovation in the public sector?*
- 6. Is there anything else you would like to add about innovation in the public sector?*

## Phase Two: (Experts and Influencers)

- 1. Please describe your understanding and perception of innovation in the public sector?*
- 2. How important do you believe innovation is to the public sector?*
- 3. Please comment on the following? ( Through this question, perceptions, issues, barriers and enablers identified in phase one of this study were discussed with the Expert / Influencer, dependant upon their areas of expertise or influence. That is, the probing questions differed for each participant*
- 4. How do you believe innovation can be enhanced in the WA public sector?*
- 5. Is there anything else you would like to add about innovation in the public sector?*

The researcher conducted twenty seven interviews over a ten month period, thirteen of these being in phase one and the remainder in phase two. All but two interviews were held in the participant's office. Of the two remaining, one was held in a café at the request of the participant, and one was a phone interview because of distance and both of these interviews were recorded. Because of the semi-structured, in-depth nature of the interviews and the choice of Leaders, Experts and Influencers, data saturation was reached in both phases after about ten interviews. The remaining interviews were scheduled, so proceeded, and reinforced the finding and insights already gained.



Although many authors specify the number of interviews that should be held, for example, Boyd (2001) regards up to ten participants as sufficient to reach saturation, Creswell (1998) recommends interviews with ten people sufficient for a phenomenological study; the researcher was keen to conduct as many interviews as was needed in each phase to achieve data saturation. The researcher was supported in this strategy by a number of schools of thoughts. The first is the premise that qualitative researchers, in trying to reach data saturation, need to

*'interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know' (Kvale, in Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p 93).*

The researcher was prepared to do this and did achieve the data saturation objective. Second is the recognition that

*'there is an inverse relationship between the number of informants and the depth to which you interview them' (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p93).*

The researcher was reassured that because she had undertaken a strategy of semi-structured, in-depth interviews that this would provide considerable and rich data to give meaning to the study.

A digital tape recorder was used to record the interviews. The researcher also wrote notes both during, but more significantly, after the interview. The digital recordings were stored on the computer as 'wave sound' files and transcribed into word and RTF documents. The researcher transcribed all interviews, in full, as soon as possible after the completion of the interviews to ensure maximum recall and exposure to the data.

## Data Analysis

The aim and method of data analysis is extensively described in the literature. Data analysis is described by Denzin and Lincoln (2003) as the interpretive practice of making sense of one's findings and is both artistic and political. Data analysis is the end goal of qualitative research design. This involves the process of data reduction into a compelling authentic and meaningful statement and presented in a narrative form supported by evidence from the statements and behaviors recorded in field notes, critical reflection journals, and interviews (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Empirical assertions made by the researcher were supported by direct quotations from notes and interviews.

Similarly, Dey (1993) describes data analysis as identifying and linking analytic categories. He breaks this down into three connecting processes; describing, classifying and connecting. Tesch (1990) also writes that there are many types of qualitative data analysis and that analysis should be an inductive, data led activity. Data analysis is described by Miles and Huberman (1994) as referring to data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification. The researcher drew comfort that all of the above credible authors thought the aim of data analysis was to describe a phenomenon thoroughly and comprehensively.

Specifically referring to data analysis using a phenomenological perspective, there are many methods of qualitative analysis advocated by a range of authors. Denzin (1989) advocates Husserl's concept of bracketing, suggesting the following steps:

1. Locate within the personal experience, or self story, key phrases and statements that speak directly to the phenomenon in question,
2. Interpret the meaning of these phrases as an informed reader,
3. Obtain the participants' interpretation of these findings, if possible,

4. Inspect these meanings for what they reveal about the essential, recurring features of the phenomena being studied,
5. Offer a tentative statement or definition of the phenomena in terms of the essential recurring features identified in step four.

The researcher must be open up to the possibility of discovering meaning in the phenomenon under study. Moustakas (1990) advocates a heuristic approach to data analysis to achieve this. He suggests using inductive analysis through five stages as follows:

1. Immersion in the setting starts the inductive process,
2. The incubation period allows for thinking, becoming aware of nuances, meaning and insights, to achieve understanding,
3. A process of illumination that allows for increased awareness,
4. A phase of explication that includes description and explanation to capture the experience of individuals in the study,
5. Creative synthesis which enables the researcher to synthesize and bring together the whole story, including the meaning of the lived experience.

As outlined above, the main aim of the analysis is to describe and explain the essence of the experience and the meaning in participants lives (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). With this in mind, the researcher chose to follow a method of data analysis based on Moustakas above, but refined by Patton (1990) who identified a number of basis steps specific to phenomenological analysis. This will now be described in reference to the study.

## Epoche

Epoche is the period in which the researcher must examine herself in order to identify personal biases and remove all traces of personal involvement in the phenomena being studied (Moustakas, 1994). The concept of Epoche is explained succinctly by Katz, in Patton (1990) as follows:

*'Epoche is a process that the researcher engages in to remove, or at least become aware of prejudices, viewpoints or assumptions regarding the phenomena under investigation. Epoche helps enable the researcher to investigate the phenomena from a fresh and open view point without prejudgment or imposing meaning too soon. This suspension of judgment is critical in phenomenological investigation and requires the setting aside of the researcher's personal viewpoint in order to see the experience herself' (p 407).*

To achieve Epoche, the researcher spent a period of time reflecting on her experience in the WASPS, and in particular her own perceptions of innovation. Reflections included thinking more deeply about the successful innovation seen and the factors that had influenced innovation within this sector. This was a period of time where the researcher's preconceptions and judgments were cleared and therefore the ability to look at the study with more objectivity. The researcher felt that the period of Epoche for her was ongoing throughout the study, and this was supported by Patton (1990) who states that Epoche is

*'an ongoing process rather than a single fixed event' (p408).*

## **Phenomenological Reduction**

Phenomenological reduction is the next phase, in which the researcher brackets the rest of the world and any presuppositions with which she approaches the study, the aim being to identify the phenomena in its purest form (Patton, 1990). For the researcher, this phase was consistent with Epoche in that she continued to be deliberately and purposefully open to the phenomena as described by the participants. One of the strategies the researcher used was to repeatedly listen to the audio of every interview multiple times to become familiar with the phenomena. This strategy was supported by Groenewald (2004) who advocated for repeated listening to interviews to

*'develop a holistic sense, the 'gestalt' (p 18).*

## **Clustering Around Themes**

The next phase in the data analysis undertaken by the researcher was to cluster the categories around themes. This stage was significantly time consuming for the researcher because of the abundance of data. The software package, Nvivo, as detailed below, was used by the researcher to assist in the data management of this stage.

The method of data analysis was as recommended by Moustakas (1994) for this phase, in that every significant statement was initially treated as possessing equal value. Statements that were irrelevant, repeated and were overlapping were not included and what remained were the textual meanings. The researcher examined the significant statements and then clustered them around themes. This stage resulted in 118 themes (called nodes in Nvivo) being identified in phase one, and 153 themes in phase two. The reader will see in the 'findings' chapter, there were often overlaps in these clusters, and Groenewald (2004) warns that this should be expected

*'considering the nature of human phenomena' (p 20).*

### **Structural Synthesis**

Patton (1990) writes that structural synthesis is the final stage and involves the articulation of the 'bones' of the experience of the phenomenon, and the description of its deep structures. This stage resulted in the writing of the 'discussion' chapter where the researcher described the 'essence' of the phenomena of innovation in the WASPS. In accordance with rigorous phenomenological data analysis, the researcher ensured that this chapter reflected the context from which the themes emerged (Moustakas, 1994). This is supported by Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) who write that the essence statement

*'can only reflect a particular time, place and the experiences of the individuals interviewed...but their experiences vary greatly because of their cultural or historical backgrounds' (p 24).*

The software package of NVivo was used to manage the data during data analysis. NVivo is a multi-functional software system for the development, support and management of qualitative data. NVivo allowed the development of an understanding of the data collected throughout the interview process and allowed all data collected to be organised and referenced by two separate but parallel databases, called the document system and the index system (Weitzman and Miles, 1995). The document system kept track of all of the text files and the index system organised codes and kept track of the way the text was indexed. The researcher used an independent researcher to validate the data analysis.

### **Synthesis of Themes**

Once all data was analysed, the researcher synthesized the information gathered from both phases to inform the discussion on innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector. This was a reflective time for the researcher during which time she related the findings to the research questions and provided a rich description of the arising concepts and perspectives.

### **Additional Literature Review**

Following the analysis of the transcribed data a subsequent literature review was conducted to 'check out' the emerging themes arising from the analysed data for theoretical sensitivity. This literature search included a broad overview of innovation, not only that pertaining to the public sector.

## **Synthesis of Emergent Themes**

As a result of the data analysis process, synthesis of the themes emerging from the two phases and an added literature review for theoretical sensitivity, the researcher was able to focus the findings of the study in terms of the research questions. Following synthesis of both phases, innovation in the WASPS was discussed in terms of a definition for innovation for the WASPS, the perceived importance of innovation and the 'current state' of innovation as perceived by participants. Perceived enablers and barriers for innovation in the WASPS were discussed in terms of cultural, structural and human resource factors. In addition, the researcher discussed how innovation in the WASPS could be enhanced. Strategies for enhancement were presented in the form of an 'emergent model'.

## ***Trustworthiness and Rigour***

It was vital that the researcher demonstrated trustworthiness and rigour throughout this study. Credibility of the research was enhanced by the application of a number of strategies suggested by a range of researchers including Rubin and Rubin (1985), Denzin and Lincoln (2003) and also a framework offered by Patton (1990), who suggests three elements.



The first element of credibility described by Patton, refers to the use of sound techniques and methods of qualitative analysis are used to ensure the integrity of the data collected and the analysis undertaken. Rigour in data collection and analysis is ensured by triangulation. Triangulation is the display of multiple, refracted realities simultaneously (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). The use of triangulation ensures that there is an in-depth understanding of the phenomena of innovation. Flick, in Denzin and Lincoln (2003) writes that the combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical methods, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry.

Of the four basic types of triangulation outlined by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), namely data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation, the researcher uses data triangulation, by collecting data from a number of Leaders from different departments and agencies as well as a broad sampling of Experts and Influencers.

To further ensure rigour, the researcher asked another researcher to select a sample of the data, check transcripts against the recording and the analysis of the data. The accuracy of the researcher's work was verified and the researcher was satisfied with the accuracy of the transcript.

Credibility and rigour of data collection and analysis was further enhanced by adopting a number of criteria advocated by Rubin and Rubin (1985), including transparency, consistency, coherence and communicability. Transparency was ensured in this study by the inclusion of a full and detailed account of the research process, included in the thesis. The original transcripts of the interview are kept. Consistency is ensured by following the same process for all aspects of data gathering, that is, the same approach to the interview protocol for all interviews. Coherence is ensured by specifying when opportunities were taken during the course of the study to further explore themes and responses given by participants. Communicability refers to the degree to which the research report depicts the reality of the research setting. Keeping detailed interview notes transcribed directly from the interviews ensures this.

The researcher also paid particular attention to replicability. Whiteley (2002) outlines that

*'each process and procedure in the research needs to be documented so that it is able to be replicated, as far as the research context allows' (p5).*

The trail of documentation, called the audit trail, is important for two reasons. Whiteley (2002) writes that

*'it allows others to verify the systematic and rigour claims being made' and secondly, 'it allows, as far as practicable, replicability of research activities' (p 24).*

The second element of credibility described by Patton (1990), includes the

*'credibility of the researcher, which is dependent on training, experience, track record, status, and presentation of self' (p461).*

The credibility of the researcher is also ensured by outlining any connection the researcher has with the participants of the study, including whether they are known to her, or whether or not she has had any professional connection with the Departments from which the participants are employed. The credibility of the researcher was demonstrated by her willingness and her ability to bracket preconceived ideas and information about innovation in the public sector gained from previous employment with the public sector.

Finally, the third element of credibility outlined by Patton (1990) includes the philosophical belief in the phenomenological paradigm, and a fundamental appreciation of

*'naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis and holistic thinking' (p 461).*

The researcher is well versed with the phenomenological paradigm and comfortable in adopting this appropriate paradigm for the study by arguing for a constructivist ontology, interpretative epistemology and qualitative methodology. A summary of credibility and rigour for this study is offered in figure six below.

Criteria of trustworthiness and rigour	Applied in this study:
Data triangulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collection of data from a number of Leaders from different levels and departments within the public sector and a diverse range of Experts and Influencers.</li> <li>• Review of data transcription and analysis by an independent researcher</li> </ul>
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of a full and detailed description of the research paradigm, design, process and method</li> </ul>
Consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following the same process of data gathering for all the interviews through a formulated protocol</li> <li>• Following the same process for analysis of all data through a formulated protocol.</li> <li>• Use of independent supervisor for the whole of the study</li> <li>• Use of validated software program</li> <li>• Use of an independent coder / researcher to validate analysis</li> </ul>
Communicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping detailed interview notes</li> </ul>
Replicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping a detailed audit trail such as notes, raw analysis and transcription of interviews</li> <li>• Inclusion of a full and detailed description of the research paradigm, design, process and method</li> </ul>
Credibility of researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of a curriculum vitae detailing professional and research experience</li> <li>• Bracketing by researcher of preconceived ideas and information</li> </ul>
Belief in the phenomenological paradigm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying the appropriate paradigm for informing the research objectives and adopting a constructivist ontology, and interpretative epistemology and a phenomenological methodology</li> </ul>

**Figure 6: Summary of Criteria of Trustworthiness and Rigour Considerations**

### ***Ethical Issues And Data Storage***

In conducting qualitative research, Fontana and Frey, in Denzin and Lincoln, (2000) write that ethical concerns have revolved around the topics of

*'informed consent, right to privacy and protection from harm' (p 662)*

This study is conducted under the guidelines set by Curtin University (Handbook of Guidelines and Regulations for Higher Degree by Research) and therefore complying with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) (1997) Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. The purpose of this statement is to protect the welfare and rights of participants in research, and secondly to facilitate research which will be of benefit to the researcher's community or humankind. In particular, the researcher complied with principles outlined in the statement designed to reflect integrity, respect for persons, beneficence and justice (principal 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4); consent (1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.12); research merit and safety (1.13, 1.14, 1.15); and ethical review and conduct of research (1.16, 1.18, 1.19, 1.20).

The aims of the research were made clear to the participants. This was achieved in the form of a letter to potential participants seeking their permission to participate in the study. Participants were also made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The written communication to the participants also provided a guarantee of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. In recognition of recommendations in the Privacy Act (1988), the researcher ensured that the collection, storage and disclosure of personal information conformed to NHMRC recommendations (18.1, 18.2, 18.4). Data storage was conducted in accordance with the Curtin University Guidelines. This meant that the Graduate School of Business will keep data tapes, in digital form, for five years.

## Summary

This chapter has outlined the research paradigm of the study which is summarised in the following table.

Paradigm Perspective	Description	
Ontology	Constructivist	The nature of reality is constructed by the participants involved in the research
Epistemology	Interpretive	The researcher will interact with the participants of the study, and recognise the value laden nature of this study
Methodology	Qualitative	A qualitative methodology will allow context bound information to emerge.
Theoretical Perspective	Phenomenology	A phenomenological approach will allow participants to describe the structure and essence of the phenomena of innovation

**Figure 7: Summary of Research Paradigm**

Further, the chapter outlines the important considerations of the research design and in particular provides support for the researcher's choice in sampling, data collection and analysis (including consideration given to compliance with analysis using a phenomenological perspective). Finally a detailed account is given of the issues around the trustworthiness, rigour, and ethical issues of the study. In the following chapter, the research findings will be presented.

## Chapter Four: Findings

### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings from both phase one and phase two of the study. The findings will be presented consistent with the methodological considerations presented in the previous chapter and the research questions proposed in the study. The research questions as proposed are:

- 1. What are the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst Leaders?*
- 2. What are the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst Experts and influencers?*
- 3. What are the barriers and enablers to innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector*
- 4. How can innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector be enhanced?*

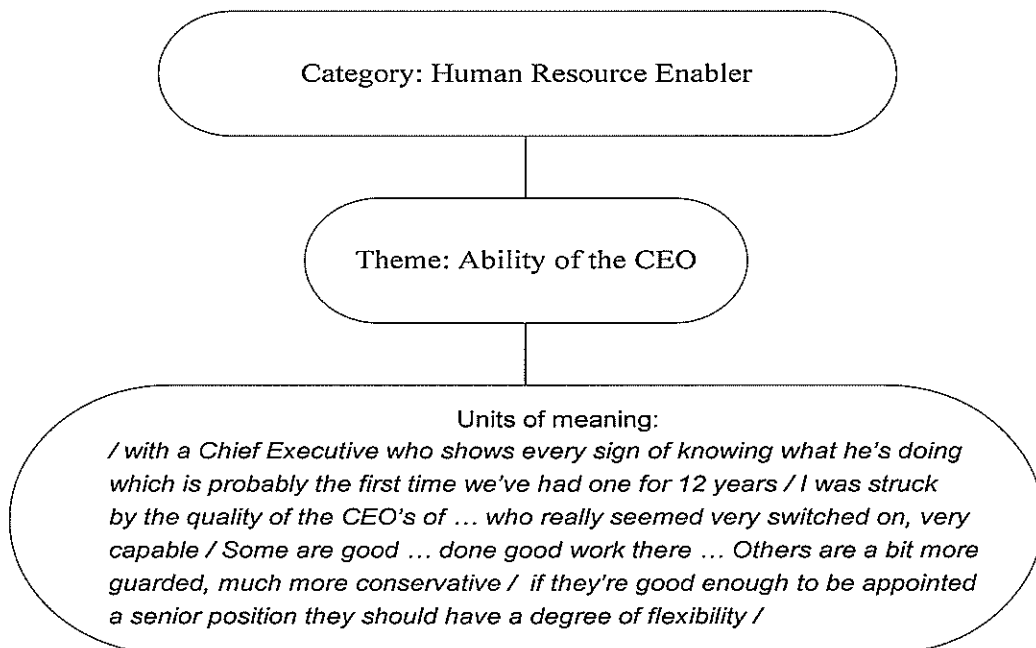
This chapter will commence with a description of findings from phase one of data collection which aimed to discover the perceptions of Leaders from the Senior Executive Service (SES) of the Western Australian State Public Sector (WASPS) on questions one, three and four above.

Following the presentation of findings from phase one, the findings of phase two will be presented covering research question two, three and four. Following a similar methodology used in the first phase of the data collection semi-structured, in depth interviews were used to ensure that the voice of the 'Expert' and 'Influencer' was heard.

### ***Conventions used in the reporting of findings***

A consistent approach to the reporting of findings is adopted to ensure clarity of the information presented. Quotations are used extensively to support the emergent themes but it is neither possible nor appropriate to depict the robustness of responses in numeric form. Nevertheless the researcher was very cognisant of the responsibility for representing support for emergent themes and to this end a theme was considered as emerging when it was robust in terms of its support through participant's responses.

In this study the researcher uses the term *category* to represent a group of themes that have emerged from the data. While in the example below only one theme is depicted, it is a fact that numerous themes contribute to a category. A *theme* therefore is made up of units of meaning that have emerged from the data, and supported by direct quotations from participants. The diagram below shows four units of meaning contributing to a theme. The diagram illustrates the distinction between a category, a theme and a unit of meaning.



**Figure 8: Categories and Themes**



The conventions used throughout this chapter are as follows:

- *Italic* type, indented in the text, will indicate a direct quote from the participant data.
- Direct quotes in italics will be grouped and the convention of / xxx / will be used to indicate quotes from different participants, or quotes taken for the same participant but from different parts of the interview.
- Words in square brackets [ ] within the direct quotes will indicate the researcher's additions. The researcher will only use this convention when, not to do so, would cause confusion as to the meaning or context of the quotation given.
- The insertion of ... in some portion of a direct quotation indicates that the researcher has either removed words that may identify the participant or the organisation being referred to, or that a proportion of the direct quotes, such as small talk with the researcher, may not be relevant, and has been removed without altering the meaning or context.

It should be noted that the direct quotes from participants will be quoted as said. The interviews have been transcribed with a high degree of accuracy and there has been no attempt to correct any grammatical errors in the transcriptions. Also this chapter seeks only to report the findings through the themes that emerged and a more detailed discussion of the findings will be given in the subsequent chapter.

### ***Phase One: Perceptions of Leaders***

Research question one being '*what are the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst Leaders?*', resulted in a number of themes arising. These will now be discussed, including general understanding and perception of innovation in the WASPS, enablers to innovation, barriers to innovation and examples of WASPS innovation.

## Understanding and Perceptions of Innovation in the WASPS

### Definition of Innovation.

All participants in the study were asked to articulate their 'perception of innovation in the WASPS' as an opening question in the interview. The purpose of this question was to discover whether the participant's understanding of innovation was consistent with the definition adopted in the study. This was especially important because the frame of reference for the study was not confined only to innovation within a 'research and technological' paradigm.

The researcher was sensitive to the need to 'bracket' her understanding and definition of innovation during the interview to ensure that participants were not influenced by the perceptions of the researcher. On one occasion when a participant asked the researcher what her definition of innovation was before responding to this question, the researcher re-stated the question with an explanation of how important the perception of the participant was without being influenced by the researcher's perspective.

Analysis revealed a consistency in the description of innovation by all participants. Interestingly, a broad perception was evident. This was captured in the following responses:

*/ initiatives, programs, services, whatever, that are undertaken in a different way /  
anything that creatively gets the work done/*

Many participants described innovation as something 'new', rather than an improvement of a process. Perceptions included reference to new ways of doing things, of thinking, and of looking at things.

*/ new ways of doing things to achieve good outcomes, or new ways of doing something, instead of the same old / new management, new processes, new anything really / implementation of something new as opposed to dreaming up something new / innovation as being service driven and a new way of doing things, a new way of thinking about things in a different approach / coming up with new ways of looking at things, new ways of doing things, new ways of thinking about things /*

There was also a perception that the definition of innovation needed specific reference to the context of the public sector and the sector's need to respond to the community.

*/And in the public sector dimension, it's in the interest of the wider community and public good /*

Equally, participants discussed the importance of 'application', with innovation not just being about an idea, but rather a new idea that was applied.

*/ It's the actual applied dreaming / applying the mind and work behaviour to different ways of approaching work, which can, of course, mean some different approach in attitude and systems and process etc / application of the mind, and people being able to think a bit differently, and to lift themselves up beyond the here and now, and look to alternative approaches /*

Innovation was also seen as thinking differently. This was highlighted by several participants.

*/looking at the practices and process that you have, and looking at ways of doing them differently, more effectively, more efficiently, and perhaps looking outside the square box / problem solve outside of the square/*

Overall the findings clearly indicate that the definitions given by the participants were consistent with the definition of innovation adopted in this study, being *an intentional process of turning opportunity into new and beneficial ideas and putting these into action*. It was encouraging that Leaders within the WASPS viewed innovation more broadly than just a 'research and development' focus.

### **General Perceptions about Innovation**

There appeared to be little consistency among Leaders regarding their general perceptions about innovation in the WASPS. Many significantly negative perceptions were evident, as there were positive ones, and this allowed for a very broad picture of innovation to emerge for the WASPS.

One theme that arose from the findings was an indication about the appetite for innovation amongst senior leaders in the WASPS, and across the sector more generally. There appeared to be a willingness to embrace innovation and Leaders recognised that an appetite for innovation was important and that the sector needed to look at better ways of responding to public need.

*/ I think that there is a genuine attempt being made at senior levels, premier and cabinet and within other structures ... to foster innovation / we explore what might be / And the old cliché, we have got to work smarter. You cannot use the old paradigms of thinking of service delivery ... You have got to look at smarter ways of doing things ... and of doing business and interacting with the community, of delivering our services, of working smarter and doing more with the same, or more, or with less in our case /*

However, many participants were skeptical about the commitment of the sector to innovation, their perceptions reflecting that all may not be well in terms of the intent or appetite to innovate. Participants commented about such things as lack of encouragement, leadership and direction and a general willingness to accept the status quo.

*/ they [the public service] say they want innovation, but I think a large part of the system seems to almost preclude any genuine attempts / I don't think we encourage nearly enough / Does the system however described, promote innovation in the public sector and the answer is no / what its lacking ... is clear leadership and direction. Again the motivation for that [innovation] to happen is lost. Leaders are feeling less able to lead, less willing to lead. And in that context, and more willing to accept that status quo and accept that you can't influence what's happening /*

The perceived difference between what was articulated about innovation within the WASPS and the reality of innovation was described. This included the need for rewards systems and improving the reputation of the WASPS as an innovative public sector.

*/ we say that we want innovation. ... that it's fundamental to us, and the way we want to go. Then we act totally differently in terms of the support we put in place to make it happen and the rewards system that we deploy and I think we have got to work on that before we expect to see innovation, or before we expect to see the public sector really getting a reputation that its innovative. It's something to do with walking the talk/*

Participants described, in rich terms, the extent to which the WASPS achieved innovation. In fact the capacity of the sector to innovate received significant criticism. This included the perception that the WASPS has outdated practices, hierarchy, processes and systems that affect the capacity to innovate.

*/ I would say that our innovative practices ...haven't changed much since the 1960's. / it comes back to the public perception more generally of the public servant as being a bit of a lame beast / because of the hierarchy, and the processes, and the system, its very hard to get innovation and change / They are so close to those core roots of the framework that their entire decision making is so heavily encumbered by it, that their capacity to innovate themselves is about zero / quiet traditional and quiet boxed /*

Other participants were less critical, commenting that the WASPS is more innovative than seen for some time. Perceptions included that innovation was constant and always at the forefront of manager's thinking.

*/ So I think there's perhaps even more of that [innovation] than I have seen for many years / I think that the Public Sector is enormously innovative / constantly undergoing reform and innovation. Some of it is reactive, some of it is deliberately proactive / innovation may be something as wonderful as a group of staff who are putting forward projects about how they think their service could be better / It is there, you can see it is bubbling in the surface and every now and then / there is a lot of people who have dedicated their time and energy to it [innovation] for so many years and committed to it, truly believing that one day their time will come when they will be heard and their innovative idea will become part of standard practices / there is not a five minute period that I, like other public sector managers, feel they should be doing something better, and in that context innovation is alive and dynamic /*

Many Leaders described the extent to which innovation was important across all levels of the WASPS, most acknowledging that there was a capacity for innovation at the 'coalface'. Further, participants acknowledged that innovation could actually be driven and initiated by employees in lower levels of the bureaucracy.

*/ I'm also seeing good examples of innovation being taken at lower levels as well. Grass roots stuff emerging / I see it as having applicability to my people at the most junior levels, and new entrants at that into the organisation, as I do for people at my level. I see innovation applying right across the organisation, at all levels / the real smart innovative things really do happen at the lower levels of the organization / but it cuts right across the ... sector, both at the coalface level all the way through to senior management in an organization /*

Innovation at senior levels appeared to be more problematic with participants believing that innovation 'gets beaten out of you' as public servants become more senior in the WASPS. Leaders perceived that there were many influencers affecting innovation at senior levels including political influence.

*/ And that's more evident at middle and lower levels, than it is in senior level. It's like it gets beaten out of you as you get further up the ladder. I don't know maybe their passion gets channeled into other things / The higher you get the more politics there seems to be, both departmental and government politics / I think there are opportunities there to apply innovative practices, where as its something happening in isolation and it belongs to a restricted domain if you like, then it's less likely to have the necessary high level support /*

Participants commented on departmental dynamics both from the perspective of within their own department and also between departments within the WASPS. Firstly, Leaders perceived that there were good examples of intradepartmental innovation between departments was minimal bureaucracy affecting innovation intradepartmentally.

*/ So within the silos of the public sector itself you still see some good examples of that / the bureaucracy is minimal internally, so actually making innovative change, or making innovation happen, is very easy in the sense that the approval process is very easy and you have higher levels of autonomy, irrespective of the level of people /*

Alternatively Leaders perceived that innovation didn't flow freely within departments of the WASPS believing that some departments were hindered by tradition.

*/ There are parts of this organisation that are, I guess, quiet traditional and quiet boxed, where people know the boundaries of what they are on about and innovation doesn't flow as freely as it does in other places / I think it does differ across a spectrum of services / So I guess there's a difference across different departments. To be fair I think there are variations within this department as well /*

Participants also commented on the dynamics of innovation between departments within the WASPS indicating that interdepartmentally rivalries existed. In addition it was felt that there were different levels of willingness for interdepartmental innovation.

*/ There are jealousies across the government departments but you know we have come up with this innovative way of doing things why would we want to go and share it with you / They all have a different willingness /*

The above perceptions are best summarized with the succinctness of a participant, who had worked in a number of different agencies and who felt that innovation within the WASPS was varied according to levels of bureaucracy and resources.

*/ In terms of innovation in the public sector, it's probably spotted and varied according to the agency or department, its resources, size, and level of bureaucracy and willingness to actually look at innovation /*

General perceptions about innovation in the WASPS included opinions about the constraints for innovation. As with many aspects of the study, there were differing opinions expressed about the extent of constraints. Some Leaders were optimistic, perceiving that the environment within the public sector was conducive to innovation, that it was possible to overcome inhibitors and constraints.

*/ My experience has been good although I'm also aware of other people who have been challenged and not been able to run with ideas / My experience has been that I haven't come across too many barriers / Despite the inhibitors and constraints that we will always have, to varying degrees in the public sector, they should not be show stoppers to people being as innovative and freewheeling as they might /*

Conversely, others participants suggested the WASPS was constrained and suggested that the sector was so encumbered that it created an environment of constraint for innovation.

*/ The public sector is so dominated with issues of equity and fairness and related matters that it has really, really, really struggled to introduce any half decent approaches, innovative approaches /*



The view that the culture of the sector could affect innovation in the WASPS also surfaced in the analysis of findings. The importance of a culture to support innovation was recognized and supported by the following comments.

*/ By and large I think that there is a reasonable culture of supporting innovation ... and its also part of that culture recognising and rewarding when good innovative ideas come along and people do come up with new ways of doing things / So there has to be an environment that both challenges and critiques the existing, whatever it is / It's very much about creating the environment and culture for that / It's very much a cultural thing /*

Leaders believed that the ability of public servants could influence innovation and its success. For example, it was perceived as preferable for leaders to be unobtrusive in introducing innovation.

*/ A lot of it gets down to how the individual projects himself and how he puts ideas forward / It's difficult to say, but if you present yourself as being out there you'll be in trouble, but if you present yourself as a grey suited, nameless, faceless public servant you can probably get away with doing some innovative ideas /*

A contrary view was presented and participants commented on the characteristics of the individual who was likely to be a successful innovator. Conversely to being unobtrusive, it was felt by some leaders that they needed to be assertive in their implementation of innovation.

*/ Innovation can be around an individual / I think at the superficial level at least, there is certainly a desire that the public service be staffed by innovative people but I think that the reality is that to get any genuine innovative way of something through, you've got to be a bit out there yourself, where you just push ahead and do it no matter what, or alternatively be prepared for a long hard slog to get anything through /*

Of great concern was the depth of disillusionment expressed about innovation by members of the Senior Executive Service. These comments indicated a deep and significant level of frustration about innovation and in particular the barriers that existed in the sector.

*/ disillusionment about it [innovation] and thought why should we bother doing too much more of this / Why would I put much effort into that / you can feel a bit disillusioned and let down / innovation right now, doesn't mean a whole lot to me / Well it's not easy / it is difficult to be fully innovative. There are barriers and there are restrictions, and blind Freddy can almost see that / innovation is almost someone else's business / I don't think we encourage nearly enough / why should we bother doing too much more of this/*

Some Leaders, especially those who had prior experience working with other Governments, offered opinions about how Western Australia compared in terms of innovation. Some participants were complementary in their comparisons and highlighted the unconstrained ability of individuals to apply new methods.

*/ Despite all that criticism, compare our government to other governments and ... probably say that WA government is not a bad government to be in .... we are in the top five percent / in W.A, innovation in the public sector here is far greater, the extent to which individuals are able to apply new methods and new ways of thinking and new policies is far more unfretted here/*

However, other participants were less complementary in their comparisons of the WASPS with other Governments perceiving that the WASPS was significantly immature in innovation.

*/ which is hardly innovation because WA tends to lag behind / Its kind of interesting, coming over here, I thought I was going back 20yrs in time when I first came out to Western Australia. I was absolutely blown away. It's only just making in-roads /*

Leaders, without direct questioning or prompting, compared the WASPS with the private sector. The number of participants who did this was significant and while some of the comments will be outlined in this chapter it should be noted that the study never intended to be a comparative study with the private sector. The researcher did feel however, that the analysis of perceptions of Leaders in this area added a rich dimension to this study.

Firstly some Leaders felt that the WASPS compared less favorably with the private sector in terms of innovation.

*/ I think that the public sector has the reputation of being a bit more staid than the average employer /*

Other participants perceived differences in the way employee's performance is managed in the two sectors and the competencies employees possessed. It was felt that innovation was more possible in the private sector because individual performance was better aligned with organisational goals.

*/ in the private sector, where performance outcomes of the individuals can be better attributed to the organisation outcomes, like an efficient operator producing higher profits, and then sharing those profits back through performance bonuses and the like. Things that the public sector has grappled with /*

The commercialism of the private sector in comparison with the public sector was discussed and participants offered opinions regarding management frameworks and systems to support innovation. Leaders perceived that in comparison to the private sector, the WASPS tended to be reactive in its innovation efforts.

*/ The Private Sector have very very snappy commercial ways of measuring themselves and those who do it brilliantly can put their hand up and say yes, this is best practice. But for us, not so. / And I'm not sure what it is, and having worked both in the public and private sectors at equal times, my observation is that the private sector, certainly in its corporate areas has much more mature systems, protocols and guidelines, ...than in the public sector, where as we tend to lurch from month to month, or year to year without that management framework /*

Interestingly, Leaders also talked about the constraints of the public sector in comparison to the private sector, in particular referring to public demands, auditing and political constraints. Leaders perceived that innovation was greater in the private sector because they were unencumbered by restrictions and rules.

*/ because those sectors are free to promote the resources they wish. They haven't got Auditor Generals looking over their shoulders, they haven't got the public saying, well the taxpayer is paying for this, where's my ten dollars worth. I think that we are looked at through very strict and not terribly helpful rules / I think it's the business of the government, certainly compared to the private sector, it's different. I think it's because the necessary business of politics/ I would say that in the public sector it [innovation] is more difficult than in the private sector because there are so many restrictions that weren't evident in the private sector/*

Comparisons were made of the ability of the WASPS to market and publicise their innovation successes, in comparison to the private sector. Leaders perceived that the sector might have a disincentive to market the innovation because of resource constraints within the sector.

*/ A company that believes it has introduced a new innovation will for profit maximising purposes, market it heavily. So it has some motives to actually sell new products that we don't have. We actually might have the opposite motive, in that in a resource constrained business, its not a good idea to tell people that we can do, we provide the service, because many departments don't have the capacity to actually then meet the markets expectations on them to deliver/*

Some Leaders compared their experiences in both the private and public sector and their ability to be innovative. Participants perceived that they were more able to be innovative in the private sector.

*/ I remember from being in the private sector having to justify every cent including our own pay rises, versus being here where it just gets given. It a very different system, and a very different way of thinking / I always knew it would probably be a struggle for me coming from Private Sector / I guess I found it a lot easier to be creative ...when I was not in the public sector/*

Funding, resourcing and profit maximization were perceived as key differences between the private and public sector and the success of innovation. The differing objectives of the public system, in comparison to the private sector, were seen to influence the extent of innovation in the WASPS.

*/ comparison with private sector, private sector objectives are pretty simple ... maximizing profits / In the public sector, things are much, much more confused around the measures of our outcomes or outputs, .... It's not like a profit that is fairly tangible and easy to count / So the public sector delivers services in a much more complex way / in the private sector you can't spend money until you have earned it. In the public sector, we are dependant on the public purse to provide us with the money we have available to us / And I use the word under funded because when I came into the private sector everyone kept telling me about this, the amount of fat there was in the public sector. I've come in and I can tell you that I have not found that fat /*

### **Importance of Innovation in the WASPS**

All participants were asked how important they believed innovation to be, both in their role, and more broadly in the WASPS. It appeared that the majority thought innovation was a very important component of their role. Firstly, the importance of increasing effectiveness and efficiency through innovation was recognized by Leaders. They perceived that innovation was important because it allowed employees to be more efficient and to maximize outcomes.

*/Innovation is important because it helps us do our job more efficiently and more effectively / Innovation is the backbone of the service delivery that we do. Anyone who thinks they can keep doing what they've always done is deluding themselves /So in that sense it's important to me to continually test where we're at, and to look to alternative approaches to our work and be innovative/ So very much a focus on, some people would say, doing more for the same, doing things differently to maximise the outcomes, without increasing or continually expecting an increase in resources. / It's critical to the survival of the department it's critical, in terms of the wider public sector /*

In addition, leaders acknowledged the importance of the people factor in innovation in the WASPS perceiving that incremental innovation was more comfortable for employees.

*/ It is important to be innovative because in the area that I work in, humans change from day to day / innovation that is incremental rather than revolutionary is much more comfortable for people. For us innovation is a constant part of the way we work /*

Leaders used many descriptors to indicate how important innovation was in their roles.

*/ It's a very important part of the percentage of what I do / I think it is fair to say moderately, yes moderately / Well it's critical in my role / It's fundamental! It's a fundamentally defining role of this position /*

The leadership of innovation was discussed by participants in recognition that the SES had a role in ensuring innovation was encouraged. Leaders perceived that they could, through good leadership could add value to their role by leading innovation and providing a clear direction in the development of innovation.

*/ innovation does mean a lot to me and I am very keen to see that I show some leadership in my division and share that with my executive peers as well / For me it will be the opportunity to add value to the role that I have and the responsibility that I have / I've provided a clear direction at the area executive group level, about the focus of those being the development of best practice and innovative solutions within a capped budget /*

Some participants however were critical about their role in innovation and perceived a lack of importance of innovation in their departments.

*/ It's a really difficult one because its almost like its not demanded of us to be new and different and coming up with different ways of doing things / for me personally it is not all that important /*

The preceding discussion has outlined the findings of one aspect of phase one; that is, the general perceptions of Leader's of innovation in the WASPS. The discussion covered the definition given, a summary of general perceptions of Leaders and the perception of the importance of innovation. The discussion to follow will outline the findings in relation to the perceptions of Leaders about the enablers of innovation.

### **Enablers to Innovation in the WASPS**

Participants in the first phase of the study were also asked to articulate what they believed to be enablers and barriers to innovation in the WASPS. The findings in regards to enablers and barriers fell neatly into three distinct but interrelated categories of cultural, structural and human resource. These categories were influenced by the view of innovation advocated by Robbins, et al (2006). Emerging from these categories are most specific themes that will now be reported in no particular order of priority.

## **Cultural Enablers**

### ***Freedom and Flexibility***

Leaders perceived that employees of the WASPS needed to have flexibility in their decision making to enable innovation to occur.

*/ Freedom! Hmm, because if you don't have the freedom and flexibility to be innovative, innovation is just a term / its freedom for me to think outside the square. And its freedom for my staff to actually know that I encourage them to do that as well /*

### ***Celebration of Success***

A number of participants felt that the celebration of success was an important enabler to innovation perceiving that the sector needed to celebrate successful innovation which in time would motivate others.

*/ We are a business, we're a service, let's celebrate the stuff we do well / try and communicate as much of the success stories as we possibly can, to be good news stories and motivate others to have a go and to see that others are being recognised and having their photos taken and the minister congratulating them with certificates being handed out, or bottles of wine at staff meetings or special morning teas to celebrate. All that sort of stuff /*



## ***Creation of Supportive Culture***

Leaders spoke openly about the importance of creating an organisational culture that supported innovation. There was a consistent perception that the most desirable environment was one in which people were able to express ideas, and were given permission for a certain degree of risk taking. Transparency was perceived as important as well as a culture of engaging employees in decision making and ideas generation.

*/ create the environment, or the culture, or the thinking for staff to work and behave and think innovatively rather than to just try and recruit people who are way out there and gun ho at thinking very differently / I think it is largely about the culture and the environment and the value you create in the organisation that allows people to be comfortable and freewheel a bit ... say, hey, I've got a suggestion for you / I think the trick is building that climate where people can....I don't think there is any shortage of good ideas ... to take that risk. Spend a lot of time thinking about the new ideas, and then working them up ... then making them happen /*

In particular, participants expressed that it was important for the culture to support employees at all levels to be innovative allowing ideas to flow throughout the organisation. This included a culture where employees felt comfortable with a two way flow of innovative ideas.

*/ not at all concerned that the Director General would think that it was a stupid idea or worse still, how dare this person communicate with me without going through the fourteen other people that he needs to / And that is the culture I'm referring to ... how people would be feeling pretty free and easy ... what we have got to do ... keep thinking and come forward with ideas / So the vision has to be carried forward. Innovation comes in levels. It's not good enough for me to be innovative ... it has to filter down ... And so there is a two way process. It filters up and it filters down /*

A supportive culture for innovation was described by many leaders, the following succinctly describing the ideal culture.

*/ you have to create that sort of environment where everyone is comfortable to come forward, have an open door policy ... Because I think that is fundamental and the key to the door, and without that, your staff will be mushroomed and will not be as comfortable doing things too much outside their defined set of duties, much less thinking laterally and suggesting ideas to management, and different levels of approach /*

### **Encouragement of Creative Thinking**

A culture that encourages employees to be creative in their thinking was seen as important. There was a perception that WASPS employees needed to think more broadly and creatively about innovative ideas.

*/ I wonder how far we can take that idea. And all that just became a bit of a challenge to see how far you could think creatively about its usage. And now I mean it just continues to grow, and to widen the scope / its more out of just thinking is there a better and smarter way of doing things / free people up to think and promote the better ideas /*

### **Credibility**

It was recognised that less barriers are imposed on innovative initiatives when there is confidence in the ability and credibility of leaders.

*/ I think a part of this is getting some runs on the board early enough with the people that could be putting barriers up for you ... I think if I had made a lot of mistakes in the early period of time with my current boss then I suspect that would have changed the way ... would have responded to the next one two, or twenty ideas that I went to ... I suppose the fact that I didn't make any major stuff ups during that period of time, means that ... has probably got more confidence with the next potentially hair brain idea that I go along with. ...will probably listen to me and say ah well, we'll run with that too /*

### **Premiers Awards**

The Western Australian Premier currently has a scheme in which excellent public sector work is rewarded through annual awards. This scheme was perceived as valuable in a somewhat superficial way in promoting innovation. Participants believed that these awards recognized good ideas and practices without necessarily changing behaviour.

*/ I think there is some modest recognition of efforts in this area ... In the public sector generally ...Premier's award. That probably doesn't change behaviour a hell of a lot, but none the less, the system would be worse off without it that way / So, it's the challenge in terms of the innovation stuff at that sort of macro level because plenty of people are doing good work in their particular areas and the Premier's awards are an example of where people have done good bits of, well it's usually more than widgets and gadgets innovation, but good things /*

### **Being Receptive to Good Ideas**

Leaders perceived that an important enabler to innovation was being responsive to good ideas from a range of sources and the commitment to encourage expression of ideas without ridicule.

*/ I think that we are not so insular or narrow thinking. And simply more receptive to new ideas. Ideas are simply more available and more in your face / Now, our executive is also reasonably responsive in terms of recognising an opportunity and moving resources around. If you've got that kind of teamwork, what it says to the rest of the organization, 'a good idea has been recognised' / And we work on the principle that no one shoots the messenger. Any idea is a good idea. And it's an old cliché, but any idea not expressed is a stupid one / And innovation requires some feedback, some kind of positive reinforcement. Some kind of acknowledgement that yes, this is better than it was before /*

### ***Support for Taking Risks***

Throughout the study a prominent theme that emerged was the risk aversity affecting innovation. A strong enabler was seen as support for risk taking, albeit sensible risk taking. While risk taking was seen as an enabler, conversely it was recognized that this, in some way, 'flies in the face' of the WASPS ethos and this is discussed extensively in other areas of the study.

*/ Supporting them with resources. And if they do take risks, it's supporting them / innovation actually flies in the face of the whole ethos of the public service. You know the public service accountability, transparency and what have you / And in terms of the public ethos around accountability, there has been one step away and then get nervous and distance ourselves from it. I don't think we have properly looked at what parameters that we need to have in place ... supporting individuals who have been bold enough to step forward / And then what I describe in terms of, 'oh too risky, pull back' /*

### ***Empowerment and Devolvement of Responsibility***

Participants perceived that innovation could be enhanced by empowerment of employees, including giving them the time, the remit and the 'power' to act on innovative ideas.

*/ I've been lucky I guess in being put into positions with opportunities to run with ideas ... being able to run with new ideas without people putting up barriers / I'm also aware of other people who have been challenged and not been able to run with ideas / And the enablers are freeing people up. It's actually allocating adequate resources and enabling people to have the time, to focus and the remit and the power to act ... it's around trusting individuals /*

Along with empowerment, devolvement of responsibility was seen as an important enabler for innovation.

*/ The theory is that areas will have responsibility for their patch and at the moment that probably isn't the case / And the lines of delineation ... aren't clear about who is responsible for what. And nobody really takes ownership. Maybe if it gets devolved out there, that they will have to sort out their lines and it will become clearer /*

### **Willingness Of Leaders To Debate**

Participants suggested that the willingness of leaders to create an environment conducive to debate about ideas and decisions enabled innovation.

*/ openly share with them my vision and my beliefs about where we should be moving. And accept the flack that comes with them in response to that and be able to openly debate that with them / I have a great belief in transparency in terms of any decisions that I make. And a willingness to debate and a willingness to accept that I'm not always right and if people can influence me in terms of perhaps a decision. I'm quiet happy sometimes to swallow my pride and accept that /*

### **Structural Enablers**

#### **Adequate Resources**

Participants perceived that adequate resources were an enabler to facilitate research and the exploration of innovative ideas. Resourcing was perceived to affect innovation in the public sector in a variety of ways as detailed in the study.

*/ funding is probably the make or break with that/ What is difficult always, with those ideas, is where the dollars to invest in it / they were quite prepared to spend ten grand on a good idea to see if was a good idea / It has got to form part of doing business in ways that are properly resourced and supported.*

It is interesting to note that 'resource limitation' was also seen as a positive and seen by some as enhancing the search for innovative ways of meeting service delivery requirements. This was thought to be due to having to find new ways of maximising service delivery.

*/ the public sector is resource starved, not in a critical sense, but that's in the nature of the business. We continually have to make do, and in that context we are always finding ways to maximise service delivery and minimise cost ... That's probably innovation in a way /*

### **Business Systems**

The existence of a business system which actually supports innovation was seen as an important enabler for innovation by leaders in the WASPS. Relevant to any model used was the focus on planning, stakeholder relationships, and opportunities for the future.

*/ what we've tried to put into this agency is a system of planning ... it's focus is on what roles and functions and stakeholders are being serviced with the sorts of goods and services we are in the business of providing ... you need to reflect on your business and the future of your business to see whether there are any gaps in the existing or opportunities for the future ... so that individuals in the work units can actually challenge what is /*

### ***Communication between Leaders***

Interestingly, participants felt that the various forums for Leader and whole of Government committees where CEOs gathered to discuss issues of common concern were enablers to innovation. Whilst it appears that these forums / committees were of little use in regards to stimulating innovation specifically at CEO level, it was felt that they played important roles in creating a culture of cooperation between departments. It was perceived that this culture then facilitated cooperation regarding innovative ideas at lower levels of the public sector.

*/ The way it happens best of all is when a Director General says to another Director General, you get your Level 6 staff member to come and talk to mine and ... they sort it out .... / I don't think you get that innovation by getting a group of Director Generals to sit around a table and talk about it / at the last meeting somebody put up a draft memorandum of understanding about how we are all going to get something to work and somebody said, well us endorsing this will give it the kiss of death / but if each DG going back to their department saying, you've got my blessing to do this / So, its how you build ... if you could have all these network arrangements is all about relationships /*

### ***Change of Government / Minister***

Surprisingly, Governmental and Ministerial changes were seen as an enabler, as well as a barrier, to innovation. As an enabler, a change to Government or Minister was perceived to provide the opportunity to overcome previous stifling of a Government lacking in innovation effort, or likewise a Minister who had little vision for innovation. A change of Government or Minister was seen as a 'cyclical refresher' where innovative ideas could receive another 'taste test'.

*/ if you do get blocked by one government what happens is, it is trotted out on day one under a new government and the taste test is run with a new direction, new priority, different philosophy / So, in that sense it's almost a cyclical refresher if in fact the governments do change ... it is a change of minister / some warm to ideas and others warm to an idea but reject another / they might reject the first idea and warm to another one / a change of minister, a change of boss, a change of leadership doesn't really matter ... It can be very, very refreshing. By the same token if you've got a basket case it can be stifling /*

### ***Innovation Committees***

Committees with innovation as their focus were seen as an enabler to innovation. Interestingly, Leaders perceived that these committees could seek innovative solutions 'without expecting an increase in resources'.

*/ we have ... now established a range of senior management committees who are responsible for various domains of our ... service ... where there's a focus on future development of new services and enhancement of existing services / We've provided a clear direction at the area executive group level, about the focus of those being the development of best practice and innovative solutions within a capped budget / a focus on ... doing more for the same, doing things differently to maximise the outcomes, without increasing or continually expecting an increase in resources /*

### ***Public Demand For Services***

The demand for public services was seen as an enabler for innovation because WASPS departments had to find innovative ways of service provision to meet unmet demand. This demand also caused the sector to find employees who could respond to the changing needs of the community.



*/ We are obviously constantly facing enormous unmet demand for our services, and we have to find, continue to find, different ways of providing those services and running our organisation, in order to meet as much of that demand as we can, within limited financial resources / government has started to recognise that there are some serious gaps in the way it does business. And that it is actually now actively pursuing people who can shift the paradigm to a more innovative one / I think we have come to a realisation that the way we do business is perhaps not the best way to suit our constituents /*

### **Good Communication Channels**

Leaders perceived good communication channels to be an enabler for innovation and felt that it was important to communicate well throughout the organisation.

*/ what it says to the rest of the organization, 'a good idea has been recognised'. People are moving out of their comfort zones to free up resources ... It should send very good signals, but if you actually don't back that up with communication in the organization no one knows you're doing it /*

### **Facilitation of Frontline Innovation**

Leaders perceived that they could enable innovation by supporting ideas and strategies which emerge from the frontline of the WASPS.

*/ examples of innovation being taken at lower levels as well. Grass roots stuff emerging / I think a lot of the challenge for innovation is ground up stuff / it tends to be more grass roots up / I think that the most creative change does not happen from the chief executive officer's desk. I often say to people we are the fertilizer on the ground, you're the ground and you're the seeds and you do the growing and I'll be here to support you through / a lot of the innovation ... has to come from the ground up / Really they're the only people that, given the factors imposed upon them, can come up with innovative solutions to how to make it work. Our job is largely to facilitate that and guard that and encourage that and reward that /*

## **Management of Risk**

A sound management of risk approach was perceived to be an enabler to innovation in the WASPS. However risk management was seen as an effective enhancer of innovation only if it provided a good assessment of the risks, rather than stifling the actions that could actually produce innovation.

*/ We have a fairly, well defined risk management system. We feel safe but in a sense that we expect mistakes to occur and we expect them to happen / we need to be fairly critical in terms of the ways in which we manage the risk / we are going to apply the laterally thinking to the 'what ifs'. If we are going to do this what is our exposure ... it actually gets people thinking about those options. And it means that we have an organisation that manages risk quite well / it's also about how we manage to make sure the department moves forward /*

## **Interdepartmental Team Work**

There was a very strong perception among Leaders about the enormous potential of interdepartmental team work and cooperation as an enabler of innovation. It was perceived that it was team work between departments that was particularly beneficial to encourage diversity of ideas and creation of partnerships to solve problems in an innovative way.

*/ there is a whole heap of the government departments ... so there's a lot of potential [for innovation] / I think one of the biggest enablers for innovation in this department would have to be the ability to form cross divisional teams / people are quite willing to muck in and have a go, to participate to bring their bit of expertise and experience along ... when it all just bubbles out you think, my God there are 30 ways. We can actually do anything here. So I think if one of the great enablers is bringing in those sorts of multi-discipline teams to have a go / that is one of the great enablers and I see this agency, throwing people together /*

Leaders perceived that the success of interdisciplinary team innovation was partly due to the task forces and reduced bureaucracy of the type of structure. In addition public sector employees appeared to enjoy this method of achieving innovation.

*/ And multi-disciplinary teams that have been brought together have no axe to grind. They are not a dedicated unit forever and a day. So they have no actual built in bureaucratic, self fulfilling, self perpetuating thing. They're just in it for a hit and if they can get a great buzz out of it, terrific, all will go well /*

There were also specific references to task forces as enabling structures to innovation. Leaders perceived that these structures have a greater focus on the task at hand.

*/ When I talk about task forces I am talking about the levels below senior leaders, to work on a specific projects or programs. There is also some formalised structures set up, say with the Director Generals, and their Deputies. But they can tend to be quite hierarchical in their own way. What I am talking about is the coming together to do something and then going back. In these groups there is less awareness that so and so is more senior to so and so. They are more focused on getting a job done /*

The ability of WASPS employees to work together cooperatively as a team was seen by leaders as an enabler to innovation, particularly in allowing employees to approach problems differently.

*/ you wouldn't get a better group of people together who think, and who have the ability to work together as a team, but come at things from different angles. So you end up with a very good and diverse approach / I was very conscious that I wanted people that could work together, so I looked for that team approach /*

## **Quality of Ministers**

Interestingly, the qualities and intention of Ministers were seen throughout this study as both enablers and barriers to innovation. In terms of Ministers being enablers, Leaders perceived that this occurred when a Minister was supportive and prepared to 'fight' for innovative ideas.

*/ or political commitment to go and fight for funds from the banker / we are currently blessed with a Minister who is a real street fighter and ... will roll up ... sleeves... once ... committed that this is something that needs to be implemented. ... will go in there and fight / also supported by a Minister who understands, encourages and wants the vision / We are very fortunate in a sense that our minister is very supportive of this department ... So I think we have had the freedom to do as we need to do, which has been provided by the Minister.*

## **Networking**

The ability of WASPS employees to network was consistently perceived as an enabler for innovation. This included informal networking as a strategy to producing innovative strategies to complex issues.

*/ I think it's [networking] an enabler because when the dreams crystallize they can be aired by people who can draw on an amazing network of both talent, external resources and stakeholders. People who are touched by or affected by that possible innovation ... will rally / I think the other enabler is people's networks. The contacts externally are exceedingly useful ... the networking ability of people both within the system and external, both state and national / In the public sector generally, certainly the networking of people generally would definitely be one [ an enabler] / I find that the informal networking is the way to progress innovation / I have managed to achieve far more things, by having informal networking / it's the informal networking that gets the job done / there has been some creative solutions to some complex problems / there is a lot of partnershiping I guess, informal partnerships happening to achieve an innovative revolution /*

## ***Restructuring***

Restructuring of Government departments was discussed extensively by Leaders and perceived as being both an enabler and a barrier to innovation. However in some cases recent restructuring was seen as an enabler, as it facilitated coordination between areas of the WASPS and indeed it facilitated the exchange of innovative ideas. In particular 'matrix' type structures and 'cross department setups' were perceived as enablers for innovation.

*/ the amalgamations and these sorts of things, people are leaving, jobs are being throw open ... the increased fluidity in the public sector enables people to present some ideas. Each amalgamation throws up new opportunities and challenges. And one of the biggest enablers is the increased re-structuring or de-structuring / less formalised structures, and that's one of the innovative things that are coming through. We are getting a bit of cross fertilization / [ a number of ] previous departments ... have come together ... So, all those former, quite siloed endeavors have been pushed together, so there's quite a broad spectrum and the complexity of it is ... perceived by both our customers and staff /*

## **Human Resource Enablers**

### ***Creativity and Talent Of Employees***

Participants indicated that a strong enabler to innovation in the WASPS was the commitment of employees who were inherently talented and creative. This was especially perceived to be true if the 'passion' of the creative and talented staff could overcome the public sector rules which were perceived to stifle innovation.

*/ There are some enormously creative people. The Public Sector is rich with talent. Superb people do some superb and creative things / their passion for what they do, their commitment and their passion which overrides, in lots of cases, the rules. And the unwritten rules as much as the written rules / I think everyone has the potential to be innovative if they are given the opportunity to be so/*

### **CEO Support and Expectations**

Support from the Chief Executive of the Department was clearly seen as an enabler for innovation throughout the WASPS. This included a clear expectation from the leader that innovation would occur, openness to good ideas, a sound understanding of the business and a very clear vision.

*/ It might have a bit to do with our boss. I mean we have a Director General who is very open to good ideas ... can recognise the ideas and see the potential in them and it might mean if they come good then it might make ... look good too / It [the ability to be innovative] has also helped by having the boss have a pretty good understanding of what my business is / This is what my CEO would expect from the area I manage / Our DG has been very overt in changing the way we do business and basically turning the way we do business upside down / the drivers come from, largely comes from a DG who has a very clear vision, is also supported by a Minister who understands, encourages and wants the vision /*

### **Employee Movement**

The movement of employees around the WASPS was seen as an enabler to innovation, allowing for the generation of new ideas. Many participants felt that new employees challenged the status quo and produced innovative solutions to problems.

*/ A lot of the people who are going are the ones who would have been going in a couple of years and I think it is a freeing up and therefore should be seen as a positive / it allows people to move around and get some extremely diverse experience / there's nothing like a fresh face asking some incredibly dumb questions / So the movement of people around has produced for us some quite penetrating questions, which at first reaction, what a dumb question and then you hesitate for just a moment and then you realise how penetrating it is. And we've pursued a number of those avenues / Yes, I'm convinced there are real benefits to people moving around because I think that's really the only way they can grow. If you become quite expert and repeat the same thing for 15 years, I think you've put an artificial constraint on your own growth /*

### **Older Age of SES**

The have been many critics about the older age profile of the WASPS, including many whose perceptions will be described later in the study. However some participants perceived that the older age of the SES was advantageous in allowing leaders to be more courageous in their approach to innovation. This included non-compliance and being willing to debate their 'political masters' and also the increased comfort in being a similar age to the Minister.

*/ But if I was someone in my role, who was at the age of forty and moving through my career, it's far more difficult ... you know full well that your whole career can depend on whether you're complying with what's required and I think that's very sad. ... I believe very much that if I feel very strongly about an issue, I will want to debate that with my political masters / there is also a certain advantage in that if you're a similar age to perhaps the Minister of ... and I have known the minister for quiet a long time, you have got the advantage of being able to have a dialogue with them / I've got nothing to lose at my age. ... years from retirement, I can and should be more challenging. I shouldn't accept that if I feel strongly that something is wrong to just turn my back and forget about it, because that for me is unacceptable and not the reason why I came into the ... service in the first place/ I'm willing to be more courageous than someone who is 10 to 15 years younger than myself and how they will react to similar situations / I'm saying that age plays a big part in term of the ability to influence and to think about new issues /*

## ***Education of Employees***

In terms of the ability of the WASPS employees to be innovative, it was perceived that the level of education of employees and post graduate opportunities were important. It was felt that this allowed employees to be exposed to new ideas and concepts.

*//ve been in the public service a long time but if you look back, I think that one of the answers is to have an increasingly educated public service / Other enablers are education opportunities and post graduate training opportunities that our staff have, they are continually exposed to new ideas and new concepts / I think learning is clearly an enabler/*

The attraction of new graduates to the WASPS, with a tendency to be younger employees, was perceived to be a positive contribution to innovation. This was because a newer graduate, just as employees who moved around the WASPS, would ask questions and challenge the status quo.

*/ when I first came into the public service I was in the first batch of the graduate programs, and then we were just looked upon as freaks. People said, oh look you've got a uni student ... increasingly educated ... receptive to new ideas / Because often some of those are brand new graduates asking some pretty dumb but quite bright questions as it turns out. We are seeing some great graduates, great problem solvers and thinkers. They are bloody hard to manage but they're great fun and they're highly productive and they're also energised too /*

Leadership programs were perceived as stimulating innovation in the WASPS. In particular, leaders who had either engaged in a leadership development program for themselves or for one of their employees were impressed with their potential to create a more innovative public service.



*/ Sometimes you need to take people out of their routine or out of their normal work / you had people from very senior public roles investing their time ... came away with my head spinning, all sorts of new ideas and so I think that those sorts of opportunities don't come along all the time ... I think those sort of opportunities, I mean you can avoid getting new ideas if your part of one of those programmes / Because I think sometimes it is just too easy to stick your head in a bucket / Come along and be challenged, come along and have your paradigms challenged /*

### **Employment of Right People**

Participants perceived that an important enabler to innovation was to have the right people in the right job and create ways of allowing people to find their place, whether ambitious to become a leader or not.

*/ there are people who are quite comfortable in their slot doing a good job, and we should not ruffle them and assume that they are all to be developed and that they are all ambitious, they're all closet ambitious people, is just not right ... we have this huge challenge of getting a whole pile of young people into the Public Sector and exposing them quicker than public servants have ever been exposed before to the diversity of the service and to pack their kit bag full of as many experiences and skills and competencies as we possibly can / Having the right people in the right jobs is clearly an enabler /*

Leaders perceived that the recruitment of people who were able to demonstrate innovative practices in the past was an important enabler for WASPS innovation.

*/ I have deliberately selected managers ... based on their innovative solutions in their past positions. So innovation is a principle key here / I'm selecting for a number of things and innovation is one of them. But I'm not going to have someone tell me that they are innovative. I am actually going to go back and see where it is demonstrated. I also provide hypotheticals for all my management staff and I am looking for the most innovative solution to them /*

### ***Provision Of Support For Managers***

Leaders perceived that the provision of support from the most senior leader to their managers was an enabler for innovation. Some CEOs perceived that they needed to take responsibility for creating a supportive environment for their management team to facilitate the pursual of innovative ideas throughout the structure of the department.

*/ I think they know that if they come up with a good idea, its going to get a good response so there's no thought that their ideas are going to be unfairly criticized or put into a box somewhere and said we can't run with that / I've got a wonderful management team ... and they do terrific things. There is very little that they would be suggesting that needs to happen that we don't pursue because usually its those quality ideas. / there's a lot of support amongst each other / I support my directors to foster change, to welcome change. And I get them to move the impetus for change down / Our job is largely to facilitate [innovation] and guard that and encourage that and reward that if we can /*

### **Summary of Enablers to Innovation**

In this chapter so far, the findings of phase one of the study, that is the perceptions of leaders, have been discussed from two perspectives. Firstly, Leader's general perceptions about innovation in the WASPS have been discussed with specific reference to the appetite or capacity to innovate, the mechanisms that support innovation such as interdepartmental teamwork, the constraints and the culture for innovation and a general comparison of innovation in the WASPS with other Governments and the private sector. This was then followed by a more specific discussion of their perceptions of the enablers to innovation categorised into cultural, structural and human resource enablers. To complete the findings of phase one, the perceptions of the same leaders regarding innovation will now be discussed.

## **Barriers to Innovation in the WASPS**

Leaders were asked to discuss their perceptions of the barriers to innovation in the WASP. Similar to that used for the analysis of enablers, the barriers were categorised into three distinct, but interrelated, categories of cultural, structural and human resource barriers. Again, it should be noted that some of these findings overlap, and transgress a number of categories and themes.

## **Cultural Barriers**

### ***Aversity to Marketing Innovation***

There was a perception amongst participants that the WASPS was averse to marketing innovation because this would promote increased demands for the product or service. It was seen that a culture of aversity to marketing innovation was a way to further limit expectations to deliver services. Comparisons were made of companies which had motives to market heavily and sell new innovative products.

*/ A company that believes it has introduced a new innovation will for profit maximising purposes, market it heavily. So it has some motives to actually sell new products that we [ the WASPS ] don't have. We actually might have the opposite motive, in that in a resource constrained business, its not a good idea to tell people that we can do, we provide the service, because many departments don't have the capacity to actually then meet the markets expectations on them to deliver / with that back drop [public demand] it a little hard to promote the spicy edge of things / the public sector is averse to seeking attention / but the public sector, its generally fairly conservative in seeking attention /*

### ***Resistance to 'Change'***

There was a strong consensus among Leaders that to be innovative, the employee or the organisation had to be willing to change. The word 'change' as discussed in the previous chapter, was used synonymously with innovation. Leaders used the word 'change' in their descriptions of the ideal culture for innovation and the barriers that they perceived to be an issue.

Resistance to change was discussed in great depth by Leaders who perceived it may be due to the 'entrenched' lack of willingness to change or take responsibility.

*/ barriers from people not wanting to do things differently / In some cases simply, 'Oh, God, not more change', people just wanting things to stay the same, people feeling uncomfortable with change. In other cases it's that so much is going on already / What underlines all those things is a preparedness to think of change as a good thing / inside the bureaucracy of the state Public Sector ... I've been struggling with is how you actually get some things to change in the organization / I think there is an entrenched nature of a lack of willingness to change or take responsibility / I know when I came here; I was stunned about the lack of willingness to change / I think if there are resilient, resistant employees, who don't want to change, who don't want to adapt to innovation, who are comfortable with the way of doing things that they may have historically done even though there's evidence that that's not the best practice then sometimes it can be difficult getting them to make the transition and they can find all sorts of ways to stifle that /*

In addition to resistant employees, there was also a perception of a resistance from managers within the WASPS to embrace change. It was thought that innovative employees found themselves 'trodden on' by Managers who do not encourage innovation.

*/ No, there is no room for innovation and innovation isn't encouraged either, and I think in fairness those staff that have tried to be innovative have found themselves very quickly trodden on because their managers don't want to hear anything. Because they are struggling with the here and now and anything different isn't acceptable / I think sometimes it's just the lack of people's understanding about their role in change /*

The rate and extent of change was also perceived as a barrier to innovation with employees appearing to embrace small steps towards innovation but resisting significant change.

*/ most people will happily embrace little bits of change, which are beneficial to them, but will balk at wholesale change, which alienates them / However, you need to make a distinction between the ongoing needs for incremental innovation versus the wish to change all things at all times, and I occasionally think we attempt to change too much. For the sake of change /*

Further, there was a perception that innovation was stifled in the culture of the WASPS because of an inability of Leaders to 'sell' innovation.

*/ If you are prepared to push change as not the whole cake, just a little bit of the icing or one of the small roses on it, then I think you are likely to be able to sell it as something appealing ... I think that the culture that goes with enabling change is saying to people, this bit is exciting / It's the way that change is sold. Not as wholesale change, not as revolutionary change, not as unsupported change but as something new, something exciting, something different/ It's how you sell change, how you support people through it /*

In terms of resistance to change, some participants went further and described that the whole system might 'conspire' against innovation perceiving that innovation actually flies in the face of the whole ethos of the public service.

*/ There is a whole push to have innovation, but the very system conspires against you / I could name you a thousand barriers to change. I think there are many, many of them at a very different level, sometimes it's laziness, sometimes it's fear, sometimes it's politics, sometimes it's budgets / the interest of innovation actually flies in the face of the whole ethos of the public service /*

### ***A Culture of Demoralisation***

There was a great depth of feeling by participants that the WASPS culture was one that demoralised staff, affecting their ability to be innovative. Leaders discussed this demoralization in terms of a culture where there was 'little satisfaction', where staff had 'given up' and had their 'heads down'.

*/ the ability of staff that work within the public sector to achieve what they would want to see as the outcomes that would give them satisfaction, has been lost. I find that people have got their heads down. They feel demoralized. A lot of them have virtually given up. And I think it's a sad reflection on what's happening / I think it's now penetrated throughout the whole service. What's sad about it is, I believed that part of the role of management is to protect those who are delivering the service at the sharp end from feeling that they can't be innovative in terms of their thinking ... I think it's also happening down that end as well. I think it's got to that level which I think is very sad / I'd love to be able to ... work with people and get them to start to believe in themselves again. And to get them to hold their heads up high and to give them something where we can recognise and value them to enable them to see that innovation which is very necessary /*

Participants felt that the WASPS culture also failed to support and create opportunities for staff, and to recognise innovative ideas that staff bring forward.

*/ I still hear people, I guess at equivalent levels to mine in the public sector and at other levels, bemoan the fact that they don't have a lot of opportunity to be terribly creative / that their ideas are not recognised or they can't run with their ideas / I think we lose potentially good people, you know you might get someone with good ideas, and unless you can get them support and surround them with people who are of like mind you will lose them or alternatively they get assimilated and lose a bit of the get up and go /*

### **Aussie Culture**

Interestingly perceptions were given about how the Australian culture affected innovation in the WASPS. Leaders perceived that the 'quiet' Australian culture was a barrier to innovation because there was a reluctance to market innovation and be assertive with good ideas.

*/ And I think in Australia and in the back woods of WA, we are very quiet. We're not the back slapping, marketing, self supporting Yanks / The average articulate American thrives on the opportunity to bang their guns. So I think the 'quiet Australian' is a trait that holds us back from sharing a lot of stuff. We are just not into, 'I've got a great idea', check this out ... We're not in other people's faces doing that / we get on and do it. And when it's done we don't go through all this bloody hoopla. We just don't. It's not like a Tupperware convention, where everyone screams and shouts and carries on. We're just not like that. So I think it's just a part of our culture, is bit of an inhibitor in a way /*

In addition, it was perceived that the Australian culture also had a 'tall poppy' aspect to it which people tried to find fault with others with innovative ideas.

*/ To a certain degree, the tall poppy stuff that is so powerful in society here / if Richard Branson was an Australian, they would be looking for a way to find whatever was there that rendered irrelevant what he had done and how he had done it to. To negate the effect of that. It's a trait that this society has ... the tall poppy syndrome, its alive and well and its an unusual culture. It comes from this notion that we are all battlers at heart /*

### **Public Pressure**

As discussed previously, public pressure was discussed in many aspects of this study and perceived as both an enabler and barrier. Some perceived that the ongoing public pressure to provide services was a barrier to innovation in the WASPS because the sector was under 'enormous stresses'.

*/ Now the Public Sector ... is under enormous stresses, there is no doubt about that, it's just unbelievable ... and that's how it is around here, with the public complaining about various services. But that aside I think there would be good recognition that the Public Service of Western Australia is doing their best and under some stress / And that includes public perception of what and why you are actually there. Public perception of the role they think you should be doing. Public pressure, political and media, or whatever /*



## **Risk Aversity**

Of greatest concern was the strong perception by leaders that the culture of the WASPS was essential risk averse, and therefore not conducive to innovation. It was perceived that being extremely innovative 'scares' employees of the sector.

*/ In the sense that you might present yourself as a radical free thinker, in terms of your appearance and the way you talk and everything, but if you try and deliver on that, you can be seen to be too far out there. Out there for the public sector / You've got to give the impression of being extremely innovative and not radical, but certainly innovative, but that scares people in the public sector. I think that's the issue that the public service is very hierarchical and that a lot of people are threatened by innovative, free thinking, go getting people, one step below them in the hierarchy /*

In the case of innovation, risk management was perceived to be a euphemism for 'let's not do anything'.

*/ Because if you get too caught up in risk management it doesn't go anywhere, because risk management can be a euphemism for 'let's not do anything' /*

Leaders specifically felt that they risked 'the sack' by taking a risk regarding innovation that might backfire.

*/ if you work in the private sector and you get your business about 80% right, you will probably get a pat on the back and a bonus. If you work in the public sector and you get your business 20% wrong you will probably get the sack / A great many bureaucrats are scared to take the risk on something again for the fear that you may work for 10 years and do a fantastic job, but one stuff up can cost you your job and that's a very real life threat. On a daily basis you live on a shadow, particularly at senior level. I'm at a level where I can loose my job very easily by doing something, whether I say stupid, if we are talking about innovation, by taking a risk that might backfire /*

Leaders perceived, with frustration, that there was a lack of preparedness of CEOs to 'take a risk', have the courage to say things, 'challenging the norms' and 'status quo'.

*/ unless a CEO truly is of the personality that feels okay to take a risk, within calculated parameters. It's about challenging, it's about standing up there and having the courage to say things that are different or say things that challenge the norms / challenging the status quo / those who will then subsequently stifle innovation, or will stifle or not support, or actively undermine the strategies that you are putting in place to change the climate, they should be dealt with /*

It was also felt that it was significantly frustrating for Leaders to be given permission to pursue innovation, only to then be told to stop. They referred to this as 'cold feet syndrome'.

*//It's the worst thing you can do is say, yeah go for it, and when it gets a bit creaky or the Minister starts having cold feet or there is challenges, saying 'you can not do that' / But the barriers came down ... We just didn't grasp the opportunity / But the cold feet syndrome came in and the doubt came in. The risk assessment came into play /*

## **Human Resource Barriers**

Human resource issues perceived by Leaders as barriers to innovation were broad and in many cases overlapped with other categories. An example is that which the researcher classified a 'workload of the WASPS' in the human resource category also overlaps with barriers identified under the cultural and structural category, for example, related to public perception. There were also other similar examples.

### ***Age Profile of Employees***

The age profile of the WASPS was identified as a barrier, particularly as older Leaders closer to retirement. In terms of innovation, it was perceived that unless the sector found ways to ensure that younger people entered the WASPS, that there would be a shortage of experience, skills and competencies necessary for innovation.

*/ You may come across people who enter the public service as younger and more enthusiastic and vibrant people, who with time have lost their edge. Had they have worked somewhere else they may have kept their edge for longer if not forever / because of the age profile. We are teetering on the edge of a very deep chasm and this age bubble's moving closer towards it and they will drop off into retirement /*

### ***Gender Issues***

Participants in the study perceived gender to be a barrier to innovation in a number of ways. Leaders identified that male dominance was a barrier to an innovative WASPS and the sharing of ideas. Gender issues are complex and not covered in the scope of this study. The perceptions are therefore presented in a general sense only, to inform the greater perception of barriers to innovation.

*/ what tends to happen is the males' testosterone gets going / there is significantly stronger boys club in this town [compared to the East] I can feel from time to time that the discussions aren't getting into white Anglo male types of head space / my experience is that men do not tend to be as collegiate and sharing of information and experience, as women ... And that's a real difficulty for our systems because people don't share / I have succeeded around here because I'm not a threat to my colleagues. It's still very macho / I mean I know for a fact that the Minister has been replacing males with females / You hear little bits and pieces, so and so has been shifted on because he's a boy and the minister wanted a female in this role and that's to some extent the femocrats taking over if you like. Whether that's good, bad doesn't really matter it's just that these are the cycles things go through. It would seem that the minister's observed something I would say I've observed and may be doing something about it /*

### **Outdated Human Resource Practices**

Leaders perceived that there were some very outdated human resource practices within the WASPS that were stifling innovation, such as restrictive processes and rules.

*/ an area where the public sector has grappled with innovation ... is in the areas of human resource management, people management and the like ... have been encumbered with people management processes that date from decades ago, if not centuries ago / The public sector is so dominated with issues of equity and fairness and related matters that it has really, really, really struggled to introduce any half decent approaches, innovative approaches, in regard to human recourse management. I would say that our innovative practices in this area haven't changed much since the 1960's / particular in the areas of human resource management people and the restrictive controls, statutes and processes put on people management / requires some staff to really do something differently, that they have a resistance about, then HR rules and practices can be a bit stifling in the public sector /*

## **Resistance**

It was perceived that the resistance of staff to innovation within the WASPS was supported by rules and regulations around human resource practice. Leaders commented that staff who are resistant to innovation can find a number of ways to stifle innovation and make the implementation of innovative practices and ideas problematic.

*/ if there are resilient, resistant employees, who don't want to change, who don't want to adapt to innovation, who are comfortable with the way of doing things that they may have historically done even though there's evidence that that's not the best practice then sometimes it can be difficult getting them to make the transition and they can find all sorts of ways to stifle that from a HR perspective / the public sector rules that we have to follow, particularly in terms of HR practices. It can make the implementation of innovative practices and ideas problematic sometimes /*

## **Professional Development**

While professional development and education of public sector staff was recognised as an important enabler for innovation, and it was perceived that professional development was too restrictive in the WASPS.

*/ And particularly professional development that I think is far too restrictive and lacks any opportunity to apply innovation /*

## **Paradigm of Working in the WASPS**

Leaders perceived that the human resource paradigm of working for the WASPS was a barrier to innovation in that it allowed employees to become comfortable with traditional ways of doing their work.

*/ I think until you have people who take a different view of about working in the public sector we are still constrained by hierarchies of public service jobs, constrained by rules, regulations and that tends to constrain people's way of viewing the world ... constrained ... in terms of our workforce, by occupying boxes that are our jobs ... until we can break that way of thinking down, that people don't own jobs, we are not guaranteed a job for life, where we get into the comfort zone in our thinking and our way of doing things, then we will always be constrained by traditional methods / We have a large number of staff, long service, who have been first brought up on the old ways. The traditional ways of the managed. The traditional ways of viewing the world /*

### **Movement of Staff**

There was a perception that talented people from the WASPS capable of innovation would move out of the sector and go overseas. The concern was articulated that an employee needed to do this to become an 'expert'.

*/Talent will either stay or go, depending on where talent wants to work. I'm very aware ... a great many ... feel that you can't become an expert ... without traveling. So a great many of our ...have worked either in Australia or overseas at renowned universities or institutes. Some will probably come back to WA for family reasons and careers, which is great but they wouldn't come back if there wasn't a job /*

Further, there was recognition of how difficult it must be for employees to move from the private or not-for-profit sector into the WASPS, and the effect of this on innovation.

*/ it must have been, exceptionally difficult to come from a not for profit, very flexible sort of system. To come into a bureaucratic government, a very large government department. In terms of innovation and the possibilities of innovation, that must have been very difficult /*

Leaders perceived that the low amount of movement internally between departments of the WASPS by employees was a barrier to innovation.

*/ lack of moving by people within the system. There are some people who do move agencies, but there are significant amount that never move. ... it's very rare for someone to move to another agency and that's also very rare in departments such as ... people, for example, never went to work for someone else. I think this has changed a little as agencies got amalgamated and merged, but I think that it one of the disadvantages of the current system because people don't get a broad enough experience, to bring back ideas and changes /*

### **Lack of Incentives**

Participants perceived that the lack of incentives offered to employees of the WASPS was a barrier to innovation. The incentives outlined included remuneration, intrinsic rewards and promotional opportunities.

*/ There are no incentives to being innovative as a public servant / We rely on intrinsic rewards and public servants have got to feel good about what they are doing for the community / intrinsic value is paramount / but it is fair to say that in my limited time in the state public service of not seeing that dimension of personal and financial gain from individuals' innovative efforts / there's not much personal incentive in terms of remuneration to do so / There isn't much on the remuneration side ... at any level. Certainly at the senior level ... the only performance bonus you can get relates to years of service not actual performance / we need to get better at understanding that and what motivates ....to attract and to retain, when we do attract people who are motivated by the more intrinsic things / We don't value people as much as we should ... even saying please and thank you ... and acknowledging them. And that isn't asking a great deal ... I do believe that until we get people back to acknowledging that or people back to managing or the politicians to acknowledge the importance of people as the greatest asset we've got, of then, we are not going to get it right /*

## **Workloads**

The significant workload of employees in the public sector, especially in the areas which have direct contact with the public, was seen as a barrier by many Leaders. Participants used descriptors such as 'struggling', 'surviving' and 'drowning' to describe the effect of the workload of the WASPS.

*/ with an increasing workload ... can be a barrier to innovation because of the psychological impact, people are drowning and we are struggling to find enough time to go to the toilet and have a lunch break, and then I'm home, grab a sleep and I'm back at this place / there is this pressure on some people, and its fair to say mostly where there's that direct customer interface, more than the back room, processing stuff, and certainly than the policy development areas ... they can't be thinking that they need to be innovative ... when they are thinking; gee I'm flat out bloody surviving /*

## **Ineffective Performance Agreements of Leaders**

There was a perception that there were ineffective performance agreements with Leaders within the WASPS, especially in terms of holding people accountable for innovation.

*/ It's a case of looking through performance agreements and having clear discussions ... set the parameters of what's important, measures against that agreement and frank dialogue around behaviours that are undermining. It's challenging those behaviours. It's looking someone straight in the eye and saying you're not supporting what we are agreeing ... what we identified we would do, and why is that? What is that about and why is that that not happening? / It's swept under the carpet /*



### ***Entrenched Staff***

There was recognition by Leaders that entrenched staff within the WASPS did little to enhance innovation and it was perceived to be the responsibility of the Leader to deal proactively with these staff.

*/ what I have seen in this department is that we have got some very entrenched staff who, when you provide them with an alternative, it is like a wake up call. And its like, 'yes, why haven't we been doing this before' ... I think innovation is there but sometimes it has been stymied, by the way people do business. But when you provide an alternative, people go 'geez, that's a bloody good idea lets go and do that'. Or that's excellent and they become passionate converts /*

### **Structural Barriers**

#### ***Funding and Flexibility of Resources***

Perceptions about resources were significant throughout the study. There were many issues identified around funding of the WASPS and the flexibility of budgets in providing not only adequate services but to fund innovation. Participants identified that there was 'never enough'.

*/ we feel the resource constraints ... it's still never enough for what we need to be doing for people we need to support ... there are constraints / they say that they are responsible, but that their areas don't give them any budget, in some cases they don't know what their budget is to undertake their work /*

There was also a perception that the WASPS budget did not increase and therefore it was necessary to look at new ways of doing business.

*/ In an environment where escalations are not covered by our budget appropriation the only way we can continue to do what we are doing and do it better than we did before is through different ways /*

Expectations about how the allocated budgets will be acquitted were also identified as being a barrier to innovation. This included the lack of flexibility in budget allocations.

*/ It's not just lack of budgets, sometimes it's the stringent scene on how things must be acquitted / My experience ... is I haven't seen the flexibility and resources available to do that / Having a very large budget, should be an enabler, because it provides some flexibility, although I think many people outside would be surprised to find how little flexibility there is around even a budget that runs at a million dollars a day /*

Participants identified strongly with a perception that the WASPS was 'incredibly resource starved'. Leaders were frustrated that they could only allocate enough to their employees to provide an adequate service and that under funding of the WASPS effected motivation and enthusiasm of employees in regards to innovation.

*/ I think it comes back to resource limitation. I doubt there is no person, at whatever senior level in government or junior level that ... is wrong spirited around those things. But the public sector, generally and certainly parts of the public sector ... has been incredibly resource starved / we have to recognize that perhaps for me as a person who provides resources for them to do the job that's expected of them ... I can only give them enough perhaps to provide an acceptable service / It's a very sad situation ... when I came into the private sector everyone kept telling me about this, the amount of fat there was in the public sector. I've come in and I can tell you that I have not found that fat. So I suppose again because there hasn't been sufficient dollars, the motivation, the enthusiasm /*

There was a perception that there was a need to allocate money to kick start innovation, referred to by participants as 'hump funding'.

*/ innovation requires a different capital ... scenario than that which is before you and that I guess is similar to the hump funding issue. There's the resource allocation to implement the innovation, is sometimes difficult / Finance can be a barrier, because sometimes innovation requires extra funds / But the crazy thing is that there is gobs amount of money from government. It's just getting it directed in the right ways / The most obvious one is that sometimes the establishment of innovative ways of doing things requires an upfront allocation of resources. There could be a time when there's hump funding, if you like, required and that's hard to do. It's hard sometimes to implement innovation without having a lead period of additional resources /*

### ***Being a Central or Line Agency***

When discussing their perception of innovation, Leaders discussed the effect of being both a central and line agency. It was perceived that central agencies had greater capacity to influence policy and Ministers in regards to innovation.

*/ A line agency is an agency that delivers services, like transport, education and health. As opposed to a central agency, like treasury, premier and cabinet, DOCEP and others? Those central agencies have a role in developing public sector policy and guidelines/ I'm not sure its widely embraced , particularly say by central agencies who do set the policy, who do directly advise government, who will advise their ministers, who will advise the Treasurer and Treasury are very, very powerful in this whole scenario./ some public servants in central agencies that are working, still feel frustrated by this. It's not a complex issue. So in that context, I like many, pretty much accept the rules and operate within the rules. Now I think that's a bit sad because there are some areas where I have some passion. I do have passion for doing things differently/*

Conversely, Leaders in line agencies perceived that they had little capacity to influence statutes and regulations that could enhance innovation.

*/ So currently I'm in a so called line agency and I have little scope, almost no scope, to put to affect to any changes in regards to those central statutes, regulation and administrative controls of the general public sector management. So in that context, I, like probably many other public servants, feel greatly frustrated about that /*

### ***Decision Making Processes***

Participants felt that the decision making processes within the WASPS were problematic in that decisions were not being made at an appropriate level and therefore being passed 'up the line' all the time. They perceived therefore that rather than policy decisions to enhance innovation being made at a high level, trivial matters were impediments for pursuing innovation.

*/ when I first came back into the public sector ... people were just not making decisions ... that every time they have made a decision they have been jumped on ... they were just passing it up the line all the time ... I would ask a question 'why have you brought that up to this level. Surely that decision should be two levels down the line. There is no need to bring it to the exec' and ... 'You are blocking your agenda with issues that really you would consider as trivia. And you [don't have] enough time do deal with the major issues there are policy decisions you need to make at that level' /*

### ***Bureaucracy***

Participants throughout the study made significant comments about the bureaucracy of the WASPS. The identified barriers in this area of bureaucracy were wide and varied, but in general Leaders were very critical about the effects of bureaucracy on innovation.

*/ Barriers ... would be organisational hierarchy and structure / I think the bureaucracy in this department by comparison, is a lot worse / I know when I came here; I was stunned about the lack of willingness to change, the level of bureaucracy /*

Leaders perceived that duplication between departments and the lack of knowledge of what each department was pursuing in the area of innovation was a barrier.

*/So you have different departments funding the same initiative and the other mob not knowing so there's a lot of not knowing what's happening in other departments/*

The effect of the bureaucracy of the WASPS on people was perceived as a barrier, in particular with employees being forced to 'fit into' the bureaucracy.

*/ I've already talked about the bureaucracy and threats to other people. The bureaucracy is the big one ... you've got an organisation that the person needs to fit into rather than the other way round. So you've got your hierarchical structure and you either fit in and work your way up, or you don't /*

Leaders also discussed bureaucracy in terms of its effect on decision making and approval processes, with the perception being that the smaller the agency the less the bureaucracy and the easier innovation was to implement.

*/ ... system, until recently, probably hasn't been very innovative. It's been very layered, in its approach. Everything has to be approved and thought out and, because of the hierarchy, and the processes, and the system, its very hard to get innovation and change ... Take another agency, such as ... for example, which is much smaller ... the bureaucracy is minimal internally, so actually making innovative happen, is very easy in the sense that the approval process is very easy and you have higher levels of autonomy, irrespective of the level of people /*

The 'size' of the bureaucracy was perceived as a barrier to innovation in that the bigger the bureaucracy the more likely it was that people would be 'cracked off in a different direction'.

*/ the bigger the bureaucracy, the less willing people are to have change occur and therefore, it gets bogged down, and tends not to happen, and gets distracted and cracked off in a different direction / I would suspect that there is an inverse relationship to the size of that organisation. I think it's probably more difficult for some of the larger bureaucracies to apply an across the board innovative system. I'm not saying it's impossible but I'm thinking that the very nature of the organisation / And the extreme size. I think the divergence between ... the vastness and disparity between the two and the willingness of areas ... to take on change / the disablers across the public sector, and in terms of those I think that the size of the public sector is definitely one and the independence of all the agencies /*

Leaders commented that there was a need for 'the bureaucracy' to look at what incentives needed to be put in place to ensure that innovation was encouraged.

*/ I think the bureaucracy looks for innovation and expects innovation, and that's a good thing. I think it would be better if they had a better understanding of what that actually meant in reality and was able therefore to put in place the right, not rewards, but incentives, for that innovation to occur. To have a realistic set of expectations about what that would deliver and what it won't /*

In regards to bureaucracy the following statement summarises participant's perceptions about the WASPS bureaucracy in particular in reference to organisational structures.

*/ because the organisation is what it is, and because ... is a high risk business, and a very complex business, and in this case a large business, ... there is a necessity to have a robust structure in place. But there's no doubt that the more robust and hierarchical that structure is, the more difficult it can be, especially for ground up innovations to occur, because you have to get through a number of barriers on the way, organisational barriers. We try to avoid that, but there's no question that the evidence would support the fact that organisational structures can result in some barriers to the adoption of innovative practices /*

## ***Intellectual Property Policy***

Many leaders had the perception that WASPS's intellectual property (IP) policy was a barrier to innovation. Participants felt that this policy was overly bureaucratic and was in fact a 'long tortuous, legal mine field' and there was little incentive to pursue IP sales if agencies were not able to retain the proceeds from the commercialization.

*/ The Public Sector is a repository of an enormous amount of intellectual wealth ... which is easily packaged and flogged ... We have a strange thing called the Intellectual Policy document and it says how you go about it. But it's always just at the agency level. ... It's a long tortuous, bureaucratic, legal mine field / new stuff, new innovative stuff could be flogged as well ... it's not going anywhere commercially because, who's going to market it? Who's going to pursue that intellectual sale? ... It's just too hard / it's a complex legal mind field. You can be done like a dinner and end up with liabilities instead of money ... Our IP sales history is pathetic. ... This constant reinvention is just churning, wasting a lot of dough, I'm talking trillions / So people just won't and they don't. It's too hard. We have invested billions in ... that we have developed, billions. And our return is zip. / the policy itself, it states that agencies in pursuing commercial deals for IP, to ensure that they would want to do that, there has to be some incentive, and that incentive out to be that the agency retain the proceeds from the commercialisation. Not the view of treasury /*

## ***Innovation Policies***

Leaders perceived that the policies of Government specifically designed to enhance innovation were actually barriers to innovation because employees thought it was just another high level, esoteric government policy statement.

*/ they do not make any difference at all, no impact on people what so ever ... they just don't have any impact, many would not be aware, and those who have read those documents, or who have had it brought to their attention, would just shrug their shoulders and say, oh well, another government policy statement, you know all good motherhood stuff and it doesn't affect me ... that's the attitude to that sort of thing and I don't think it is having any serious impact at all / theory is no good without practice ... my personal approach is to say that there is some policy ... that is quite high level and esoteric, if you like, or technical, but I like trying to get this group to focus and for it be acknowledged within this organization that policy is far better driven by praxis /*

### **Political Influences**

Numerous political factors surfaced in the analysis and Leaders saw these as significant barriers to innovation. The relationship with the Minister responsible for the particular department was perceived to be a potential barrier to innovation and as a result participants felt that it was important for leaders to behave in a risk averse way.

*/ the relationship with the Minister. Ministers don't like to be frightened by things. They get elected every four years so that's their issue. Then again, it's the same thing that if you can be seen to be a little bit new and a little bit different, but not too new and too different, that's the real way to get ahead. ... The public sector is risk averse /*

In identifying the barriers for innovation, leaders acknowledged that the political dimension was an important consideration and that innovative proposals could be 'tempered' by the political processes.



*/ I mean the political dimension is there all the time and there is no way of getting around it I don't think / We have all sorts of complicated social outcomes. Those social outcomes are tempered by the political process. ... necessary political processes / the flexibility will need to come from a political agenda ... which allowed for people to drive what the result is / In the public sector, you are very governed by the whims of the politician. Political interference in the public sector is very evident and getting more so and clearly what that means is that, irrespective of what I might do, or the direction where I might want to take, it is not unusual for me to be challenged and I'm told that I've got to follow a course which for me would not be ideal, but it's a course that has been set for me politically / I suppose there is two levels. There is political with a large P and political with a small p. I think in the role that I'm in there is a certain need for me to be able to assess what is happening within the area that I'm responsible for. And in my influencing of the people that work with me its important that I become political and be able to read the situation that's happening ... So I've got to be political in the way that I now influence /*

While seen as an enabler, it was also perceived that this creativity and talent may not be as easy to express in the upper levels of the WASPS. Participants felt that the 'higher you get' the more that leaders were influenced by political factors.

*/ that's more evident at middle and lower levels, than it is in senior level. It's like it gets beaten out of you as you get further up the ladder ... maybe their passion gets channeled into other things / The higher you get the more politics there seems to be, both departmental and government politics / I think everyone has the potential to be innovative if they are given the opportunity to be so. But I think we also need to be encouraging our managers and senior managers and our Directors to think more laterally, to take a more broader view. And to stand back from what they are actually doing and to step back and look at what they are doing /*

The reluctance of the Minister to approach the Government and advocate for funding to enable innovation was also identified as a barrier.

*/ political commitment to go and fight for funds from the banker and for some Ministers that's too hard /*

Participants commented that Ministers were at times reluctant to support innovation because of the risk of political damage, especially in the case of 'controversial' innovation.

*/ But a Minister might say, no, you cannot do that because that would be politically bad news / if there were something particularly creative that you wanted to do that maybe would be deemed to be a bit controversial ... and that may be deemed to be seen as politically damaging / Sometimes you might have a very innovative department but if your Minister is conservative, and expresses that in a fairly strong way, then you will not find that [innovation] there because your program of activities is not going to be geared in that way in terms of the investment / It's the worst thing you can do is say, yeah go for it, and when it gets a bit creaky or the Minister starts having cold feet or there is challenges, saying 'you can not do that' /*

The provision of poor advice to Ministers, mostly by advisors, was identified as a barrier to innovation within the WASPS.

*/ They take their advice from all sources and players. They get advice from their public servants, they get advice from their policy advisors, who may or may not have great insights and lobbyists and so they got to work their way through / [the Minister] is hamstrung in some respect by the people who provide ... guidance in [the Minister's] own office. At the Director General level I am very comfortable that I would be supported in whatever way I wanted to go. The difficulty is that person then needs to sell it above. And while [the Minister] is exceptionally talented at getting things, there are some times when the person who ... is assisting the Minister in gathering all the information doesn't have the knowledge that is required in order to make a ... more informed message to the Minister /*

Leaders had the perception that Ministers unduly interfered with their department's work, and that those of a more 'controlling' nature stifled innovation.

*/And the higher you are, the more open you are to that sort of influence, if they are of a more controlling nature. I think this probably stifles innovation ... I suppose in some ways it depends on the Minister and their personality, but if they are willing to intervene or influence more closely, than a more hands off approach, then you probably don't get the robust debate and discussion around making a change. What you do is, is say here is the idea the Minister has, and just do it. And it's implemented or stifled by the bureaucracy, depending on how the bureaucracy feels. But you don't get the robustness that enhances an idea, to make better it a better idea /*

When new Ministers were appointed, especially those with no knowledge of the area of their responsibility, it was seen as a barrier to innovation.

*/ Ministers coming in, I don't know how much knowledge they have in their area and they are also ... they need to, have a time to reflect on what's been done, the history, where are we up to before they can go forward. That takes a long time to happen and I guess that's why they are reliant on their people feeding them information. The difficulty with that time delay is that that equals all of that innovation that hasn't happened to meet the needs and then you got to make up for it /*

### ***Public Sector Management Office***

The central agency of the Public Sector Management Office was also perceived by Leaders as a barrier to innovation within the WASPS. This office was described as being 'irrelevant in the context of innovation' and in terms of their ability to innovate themselves and encourage innovation, it was perceived that they were 'so heavily encumbered' that they had little capacity to innovate.

*/ the public sector management office, is completely and utterly, absolutely ineffective in this regard [encouraging innovation] ... with the greatest respect to the individuals who work there, irrelevant, in the context of innovation? It's certainly not irrelevant, but irrelevant in the context of promoting innovation in the public sector, practically in regard to people / I think this is because they are very close, necessarily so to the Premier ... They have some very important responsibilities in terms of the public sector management acts, regulations, guidelines, instructions. They are so close to those core roots of the framework that their entire decision making is so heavily encumbered by it, that their capacity to innovate themselves is about zero /*

### **Restructuring**

Restructuring within the WASPS was discussed from many perspectives. Firstly some participants perceived that the lack of structural change in the past was a barrier to innovation.

*/ the bureaucracy was seen as un-changing in the past and you had the Department for this and that, and the departments didn't change, and the structure didn't change much, so that was a real inhibitor / So, all those former, quite siloed endeavours have been pushed together, so there's quite a broad spectrum and the complexity /*

Referring to more recent times, Leaders also talked about the constant state of restructuring of the WASPS as impacting on innovation in terms of unsettled leadership and administrative arrangements. Firstly participants commented that as leaders they were required to provide leadership in an ever changing environment of restructuring, 'trying to bring people together', and break down cultural conflict as a result of department amalgamations. Leaders perceived that it was difficult to get substantial innovation within the 'turbulence' of restructuring.

*/ I inherited parts of an organization that had been restructured, bits that were sort of left over bits, perceived as the strategic front end of the organization, so there is all of the things around leadership and management and trying to bring people along with you and all those sorts of things / So, with ... agencies coming together you've got ... different cultures and they look at each other initially and that is a bit of a blocker because that cultural conflict is taken as, well one of us has to be right and naturally it's me and so you must be wrong and that actually has to be broken down / so you got this turbulence going on around people, it makes it very difficult for substantial progressive things to happen or what has to happen if you have to brief a whole bunch of people that can operate in this amorphous or continually evolving institutional context and just focus on getting focused /*

Participants also felt that administrative arrangement and the 'continually revolving shape' of the bureaucracy of the WASPS affected innovation.

*/ The other barrier ... is in the context of continually revolving shape of bureaucracies ... but the administrative arrangements usually mean paralysis happens. There was various agencies invented as bureaucracies ... with primarily single focus outcomes in mind ... requires the evolution of different institutional arrangements much more flexible and adaptive institutional arrangements / One of the things in this... the matters of struggles in this organization had and probably all of the public sector has, is the constant roller coaster of shape and form and size and structure all that sort of thing / I was talking to one of the young guys the other day and he said [he'd] been in the public service in Western Australia for 8 years and he's always done roughly the same job but he's been in 4 organizations / The other barrier I guess is, in the context of continually revolving shape of bureaucracies /*

Leaders appeared to have become cynical about the many restructures they have experienced within the WASPS.

*/ So if they can get those things [re-structured departments] happening, I think it will be a lot more innovative than it has been, but it is always like why haven't we done it before. And it's that question about the bureaucracy probably tends to circumvent it, change it, or it doesn't happen, or it's not the will, hopefully this time there will be a will / I mean when you talk to a lot of senior people around the tracks they will openly tell you they have been through this before and they don't believe it's going to happen. If you have got people who are expected to influence the change saying to you we don't believe it's going to happen, then quite clearly you also question whether it ever will happen /*

### **Rules and Regulations**

Leaders perceived the rules and regulations of the WASPS were barriers to innovation and also felt that they had little influence over changing these.

*/ rules and regulations and the framework and the environment we work within / The public sector is governed by parliament legislation and regulations, and by treasury's instructions and premier's instructions and a lot of public sector management office guidelines. I am a senior bureaucrat in a so called line agency where I don't have responsibility to change any of those things / The irony I am flagging is that at a high level of it's statute, the public sector management system is very rigid and secure and restrictive, at the coal face things are quite different /*

### **'Silo' Thinking**

Participants perceived that the 'silo' mentality of the WASPS was a significant barrier to innovation. Leaders felt that their focus on their own 'patch' did little to enhance innovation.

*/ most agencies and CEO's are pretty much focused on their own patch ... It [collaboration between 'silos'] tends not to happen. It's a real struggle and the reason is, if the benefits are not in their agency for which they will be acknowledged, they tend to be less of a contributor. Maybe that's ego at the top / there is an issue and if you ask for financial contributions, it's an issue / The paralysis comes down to the turf issues /*

It appeared that silo thinking was a significant barrier to innovation with Leaders slipping into the mindset of 'turf protection' on a frequent basis rather than taking a more shared cooperative approach.

*/ the players inside their bits of turf and I've even felt myself fall into the trap, it's hard to get passed that turf ... and what tends to happen is the males' testosterone gets going and a bit of head bashing ... by applying a head bashing approach to get it to the next level of obliteration rather than actually getting a shared view of the problem ... it slips into the mindset of turf protection / What they tend to do is say, 'well we will look at our bit rather than the bit on the whole system' ... get very parochial and turf oriented. In terms of 'I'm not looking at that bit', or 'I'm not dealing with that', or 'I'm not getting involved', or 'that's mine don't touch it'. The whole system doesn't work ... It's an incredibly frustrating experience ... and it's exceptionally difficult to get people to think differently / So the disabler has been the lack of information sharing / there was a clear line between our ... and don't go there/ they want you to do business the way you have always done business. So that requires a shift in their thinking. Not only our own staff have to sell the shift to but also our stakeholders, and the constituents /*

### **Treasury and Audit**

Treasury as a central agency was seen by many Leaders as being a barrier to innovation. Additionally, the audit process and its focus on outputs rather than outcomes was also seen as a barrier. The aim of this process was seen as ensuring that the agency did not get 'qualified'. Participants felt that the audit process was focused on catching you out and therefore did not promote innovation.

*/ the financial administration and audit act which required agencies to have a plan about what they are going to do and report against it, key performance indicators. Fabulous model, best practice model, totally off the rails ... the point of being audited in the Public Sector is not to get qualified. Consequently you put rubbish in which is easily audited and you get a tick / it's real blockers, that audit mentality because it's about catching you out as opposed to helping you do / that is where the WA Public Sector has it's performance tabled for audits, totally stuffed it up, totally, they have missed the plot entirely / what numbers would you like to see? It's just a shame. ... They are just auditing and it's a shame it got into that. ... The state budget will say we are going to make this difference to the community and but there'll be no performance indicators at the end of it because it's all bloody audit nonsense. There is a disconnect /*

## **Time**

Related to workload issues, participants felt that time was a significant barrier to innovation in the WASPS. The dynamics of this were two fold, firstly the time to think and explore innovative ideas, and secondly, the time to allow innovative practices to be effective.

*/ Time can be a barrier / One of the largest barriers would be ... the time factor, is if you are going to be innovative, then how do we deliver on this and when do we get the results back ... not only in terms of the time staff have but also ... seeing the outcomes that you want. Its going to take 10, 15, 20 years / And when you have got social programs that take a long time to shift, then you don't see that straight away. So that's a barrier too. Because people say it's not working so let's stop it / and also the time taken to actually be innovative and to develop programs in the first place, instead of doing your everyday job. Because you have to actually ask people to think, is there another way to do this / Because you have to allow people the space to take that time. So someone else has got to do their job / lack of commitment or awareness to some to even allow themselves to think that it's alright to be innovative. Because there are many people within the public service who would not come from a position of thinking that innovation is alright around here /*



## **Summary of Barriers To Innovation**

The first section of this chapter discussed the findings in relation to the general perceptions of Leaders about innovation in the WASPS. This was followed by a discussion about the emergent themes related to the enablers of innovation as perceived by Leaders. This then logically led to the perception of barriers to innovation. Leaders were asked to give examples of innovation in the WASPS. This study did not seek to make specific reference to the intricate details of these examples but rather the emergent themes arising from the examples given. To conclude phase one findings, the perception of Leaders related to examples of innovation will be discussed.

## Examples of WASPS Innovation

Some additional themes emerged during analysis of the examples given. These were consistent with many of the enablers for innovation that were established in the former section of this chapter. This reinforced the themes that emerged in the study and provided additional confidence in the themes identified.

When describing examples of innovation, many Leaders explained the significant effort made by agencies and public sector employees to consult with the community and to ensure this consultation was meaningful. Participants described 'awesome consultation' with the community in successful innovation and the avoidance of 'tokenism'

*/ close enough to people to be tuning into what their needs are / a very different way of looking at what our business is / It keeps you pretty honest as well when you're that close to the people you are serving/ you are in the firing line because you are pretty close to them / they visit regularly and they do a lot to support and train, stand alongside people on the ground/ set up to deliver the services at a local level to the people/ brilliantly pursue customer focus and do it very, very well/ the agency itself is very customer consultation orientated/ The consultation involved is awesome / the extent of the consultation, the depth of it, it's not tokenism/ It's serious consultation. Public forums, public documentation / strong to your principles. You do your homework and you do consultation you'll largely get it right/*

Participants described the importance of investment in resources, in particular, technology. The advantages of connecting with remote communities in service delivery agencies within the WASPS were also identified.

*/ because we invested in video conferencing technology, in ways that the owners and developers of equipment never thought possible/ to get very close to individuals and families and children and communities in quiet remote locations/ It's all to do with funding/ a very intensive application of resources and expertise and projects in order to get on top of this issue, and I we're just now on the cusp of realising the benefits of that innovative approach /*

Participants gave examples of allowing employees the opportunity and time to explore innovative ideas and an environment where they could express ideas and dabble in innovation. Also important in successful innovation was the notion that the WASPS culture needed to allow ideas to be expressed without fear.

*/ played around with it for a while / it became a dabbling / a lot of playing around with this stuff / permission to play around with it/ having a person who was very good on the technology, and the ideas and the training helped as well / it was a germ of an idea that was just tossed around in-between people and grew / can you just poke a stick at some of this stuff, check what's been evaluated anywhere in the world and tell us what that story was / So they've done a bit of digging around and found all sorts of interesting stuff/ he had some ideas about how we could improve our services/ not at all concerned that the Director General would think that it was a stupid idea/ people would be feeling pretty free and easy / She has got some good ideas and she wouldn't have got the opportunity before/ we want you to do this as well, you know keep thinking and come forward with ideas/ We want to be an innovative organisation and we need your help, and go to whoever you need to /*

Consistent with the themes of organisational culture, Leaders discussed the importance of creating 'the right environment' and creating 'space' to allow innovation success.

*/ create the right environment for people to behave very flexibly and, innovatively and get the end result and more, that you would otherwise have not achieved/ I think its about creating the right environment/ it's actually creating the space for the innovation and the opportunity and the human creativity to actually happen /*

The importance of allowing exploration of new ideas specifically from grass roots level was also discussed.

*/ but the little things that grow up and are infectious/try to do here is to support the little things at grass root /*

Leaders expressed that the establishment of partnerships with other departments, authorities and communities was essential in innovation success. The localization of those partnerships was seen as an important ingredient in relationship building so that community members felt empowered by the WASPS.

*/ there is another unit there that we can use/ we have partnered with .../ to actually build local expertise so we spend a lot of time training up people/ invest in training up local people/ we will keep refreshing their skills and monitoring / Other state government departments are very interested in what we have done/ there are great opportunities to sell this product elsewhere/ a partnership between the local government, state government / how can we assist local ...authorities to get those skills or access those skills / We are not out here to try and impose ourselves on people and insist they use our services/ it also delivered services in a way that the people realised that all of government were trying to get behind them /*

Leaders saw that the importance of always looking for a 'better and smarter' way of doing WASPS business was an important ingredient in successful innovation. This included not assuming that the traditional way was always the best way.

*/ instead of ....trying to run a traditional ....service/ is there a better and smarter way of doing things/ because it's not traditional, they don't all line up like drakes and all that/ why are we doing it this way, asking questions/ and you have to go dig down deep /*

Interdepartmental cooperation was seen as a vital ingredient in successful WASPS innovation. In particular participants reported that when departments take into account other departments focus and responsibility when planning service delivery that this ensured a 'seamless', whole of Government approach

*/ six departments working out of one office/each responsible for delivering their own departments services, but working in a coordinated way/ taking into account the impact of that service delivery on all of the other departments/ a cross government seamless service delivery/ It achieved services better and more efficiently/ A rare example of a whole of government thing behind/ delivering government policy in a whole of Government way/the bulking up or the gathering together of some smaller agencies into some shared serviced arrangements/ people from the different agencies to work differently/ and he is talking to other agencies who are interested in accessing the information as well /*

Successful innovation included a focus on the future and Leaders perceived that this also meant they had to consider that some of their customers come from future generations.

*/ we take our customers, some of whom have not been born yet, very, very seriously/ well you need to know 2015 and onwards/ all this stuff is multi-generational/ focus on future development of new services /*

Participants perceived that an increase in the demands for WASPS services was a stimulus for successful innovation and this was similarly seen as an enabler.

*/ there are enormous competing demands for it, and they have to be managed / demands for those services have been particularly strong, recently with the events, have increased exponentially over the last 18 months /*

In providing examples of successful innovation, Leaders expressed the concept of being brave and visionary in trying to revolutionise the way the WASPS did its business.

*/ you have to be brave enough to imagine, to envisage what it might be and cast the die/  
you need to be brave because some of that crystal ball stuff can be criticized/ leading  
edge stuff/ but a vision of where we are going and how we facilitate/ We've provided a  
clear direction at the area executive group level/ doing more for the same, doing things  
differently to maximise the outcomes/ they have made some bolder moves, the not  
before time stuff/ something totally new, something that's going to revolutionize the way  
you do business/ based on totally different ways of looking at the different issues / if you  
sort of create that environment, you know, the vision /*

Leaders perceived the importance of 'value adding' to the sector as an important component to service innovation. They expressed the 'flow on' effects of innovation, in economic and community terms. This value adding was both direct to the community and also the WASPS itself in revenue and information.

*/ it actually generates revenue to build infrastructure / creation of 'flow on' effects / The  
economic flow on is awesome/ there is also huge community benefits, socially / I just  
think of the huge multiplier flow on from fixing up these bad bits/ the actual economic  
flow of that decision is, It is very significant/ It is a huge flow on and they're decisions  
you don't take on lightly/ Its actual economic value is huge /*

In many of the examples of innovation success in the WASPS, the use of a wide range of strategies was perceived as contributing to successful innovation.

*/ change for better quality service but that doesn't mean you change everything all the  
time ... indeed change of everything all the time can be very destabilizing / and brought  
together a comprehensive package of strategies/ it's a collective of strategies/ the way in  
which we've gone about information capture and sharing, and establishing incentives  
and rules and protocols around how the system functions /*

Leaders identified that pursuing opportunities to become more commercialised and business like contributed to the success of innovation in the WASPS.

*/ It was corporatisation and commercialization, all within a department and state framework/ to become economically viable you had to shift cost structures/ could see that there would be an opportunity to pursue new business/ So I actually got this job to create a new business/ by creating the framework, guiding principle, some commercial principles in that case, established by Government, by Cabinet, there was then great opportunities to do things differently / Just because of the commercial pressures, people were forced to think of ways of doing things very differently / if you set the right framework, and establish that up front /*

In addition to the establishment of partnerships with other agencies, Leaders also outlined the importance of 'alliances' with the private sector, forcing the public and the private sector to work cooperatively together.

*/ So we had to form alliances with the private sector as we couldn't provide all those services/ It cuts across a range of disciplines and non government organizations like ..., having to work together closely with private and public hospitals /*

The importance of research, particularly in agencies where technological advances created opportunities for better service provision and economic activity, was recognised in successful WASPS innovation. There was a recognition that innovation and research go hand in hand.

*/ Research and innovation go hand in hand/ There are some discoveries, both procedural and otherwise that have been developed in WA that have been later recognised as certainly best practice in the world /*

The role of the Minister and the Government in supporting innovation was discussed and was perceived as an important ingredient in successful innovation.

*/ its driven out the Minister / the Minister squirreled a million dollars out of some other budget / they're good at advocating their own work / ultimately got the support of the most senior levels of government /*

## **Summary of Leader's Perceptions of Examples of Innovation**

As can be seen in this section of the findings, the examples of successful innovation given by Leaders are consistent with the enablers described by participants. A summary of phase one will now be given to complete the findings of Leader's Perceptions.

### **Comments and Summary of Phase One**

The findings of phase one, that is the themes emerging from perceptions of Leaders within the WASPS, have been summarised in a structured format in the following table. The findings are presented separately as barriers and enablers and also categorised into structural, cultural and human resource categories. The presentation of the emergent themes from the 'examples' of WASPS innovation demonstrated consistency with the emergent themes from the initial stages of phase one and were considered another form of triangulation.

The following table summarized the themes that emerged and these will later be synthesised with phase two findings to present a holistic view and contribute towards the 'emergent model'.



Summary of Findings: Phase One – Leaders in the WASPS

**Research Question One: What are the perceptions of innovation amongst leaders in the Western Australian State Public Sector?**

Category	Theme
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad definition</li> <li>• Something 'new', rather than an improvement of a process</li> <li>• A new idea that was applied.</li> <li>• Thinking 'outside the box'</li> <li>• In the interest of the wider community and public good</li> </ul>
Importance of Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing effectiveness and efficiency through innovation</li> <li>• Fostering inclusiveness in the innovation process, recognised as an important aspect of any 'public' service.</li> <li>• Leaders as innovation 'champions' adding value to their role by enhancing innovation</li> </ul>
Current State of Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions varied inconsistent</li> <li>• Some willingness to embrace the importance of innovation</li> <li>• Some attempts to innovate</li> <li>• Skeptical about the commitment of the WASPS to innovation</li> <li>• Systematic problems</li> <li>• Lack of leadership and direction</li> <li>• Acceptance of the status quo within the sector</li> <li>• Much cliché but little action</li> <li>• WASPS was a 'lame beast' when it came to its capacity to innovate</li> <li>• Isolated pockets of the WASPS that had great capacity for innovation</li> <li>• Recognition that all levels of the WASPS were capable of innovation, including 'grass roots' employees</li> <li>• Leadership of innovation by members of the SES was problematic</li> <li>• Influence of 'politics' at the more senior levels of the WASPS.</li> <li>• 'Silo' mentality affected innovation between departments</li> <li>• Innovation was 'spotted' in the WASPS according to the agency or department, its resources, size, and level of bureaucracy and willingness to actually look at innovation</li> <li>• Depth of disillusionment about innovation</li> <li>• Significant levels of frustration about innovation</li> <li>• Dimension of public demands and political pressure</li> </ul>
Examples of WASPS Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with the Public</li> <li>• Investment Of Resources</li> <li>• Allowing Employees Time to Explore Innovative Ideas</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Questioning Of The Status Quo</li> <li>• Interdepartmental Cooperation</li> <li>• Future Focused</li> <li>• Public Demands</li> <li>• Being Visionary and Brave</li> <li>• Value Adding</li> <li>• Supportive Culture</li> <li>• Range of Strategies</li> <li>• Commercialization</li> <li>• Cooperation with Private Sector</li> <li>• Importance of Research</li> <li>• Driven by Minister/Government</li> </ul>

**Figure 9: Summary of Findings, Phase One, Research Question One.**

**Summary of Findings: Phase One – Leaders in the WASPS**  
**Research Question Three: What are the barriers and enablers to innovation in the Western Australian Public Sector**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Cultural	<p><b>Enablers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom and flexibility</li> <li>• Celebration of success</li> <li>• Creation of a supportive culture</li> <li>• Encouragement of creative thinking</li> <li>• Credibility</li> <li>• Premier's awards</li> <li>• Being receptive to good ideas</li> <li>• Support for taking risks</li> <li>• Empowerment and devolvement of responsibility</li> <li>• Willingness of Leaders to debate</li> </ul>	<p><b>Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aversity to marketing innovation</li> <li>• Resistance to change</li> <li>• A culture of demoralization</li> <li>• Aussie culture</li> <li>• Public pressure</li> <li>• Risk aversity</li> </ul>
Structural	<p><b>Enablers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate resources</li> <li>• Business models</li> <li>• Communication between Leaders</li> <li>• Change of Govt / Minister</li> <li>• Innovation committees</li> <li>• Demand for services</li> <li>• Good communication channels</li> <li>• Facilitation of front line innovation</li> <li>• Management of risk</li> <li>• Interdepartmental team work</li> <li>• Quality of Ministers</li> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Restructuring</li> </ul>	<p><b>Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding and flexibility of resources</li> <li>• Being a central or line agency</li> <li>• Decision making process</li> <li>• Bureaucracy</li> <li>• Intellectual property policy</li> <li>• Innovation policies</li> <li>• Political influences</li> <li>• PSMO</li> <li>• Restructuring</li> <li>• Rules and regulations</li> <li>• Silo thinking</li> <li>• Treasury and audit</li> <li>• Lack of evaluation</li> <li>• Time</li> </ul>
Human Resource	<p><b>Enablers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity and talent of employees</li> <li>• CEO support and expectations</li> <li>• Employee movement</li> <li>• Older age of SES</li> <li>• Education of employees</li> <li>• Right people</li> <li>• Provision of support for managers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age profile of WASPS employees</li> <li>• Gender issues</li> <li>• Outdated human resource practices</li> <li>• Resistance</li> <li>• Professional development</li> <li>• Paradigm of working in the WASPS</li> <li>• Movement of staff</li> <li>• Lack of incentives</li> <li>• Workloads</li> <li>• Ineffective performance agreements of Leaders</li> <li>• Entrenched staff</li> </ul>

**Figure 10: Summary of Findings, Phase One, Research Question Three.**

### ***Phase Two: Perceptions of Experts and Influencers***

Phase Two of the data collection involved semi structured, in depth interviewing of both 'Experts' and 'Influencers' of innovation in the WASPS. As previously outlined in the definitions section of this study:

- *An 'Expert' was an individual who is recognised as a specialist in innovation has specialized knowledge, skills and /or success regarding innovation, and*
- *An 'Influencer' was an individual who is recognised as having the power to affect innovation in the Western Australian Public Sector.*

Participants were asked a range of questions very similar to phase one. In addition they were asked their perceptions on areas, subjects, and issues specific to their area of expertise that arose as themes in phase one.

#### **Definition of Innovation**

All participants in the second phase of data collection were asked about their perception of innovation in the WASPS. Similarly to phase one, this question was designed to discover whether the participant's understanding of innovation was consistent with the definition adopted in the study. This was especially important because the frame of reference for the study was not confined only to innovation within a 'research and technological' paradigm.

Specific to the WASPS, Experts and Influencers perceived that innovation was about the 'generation of new ideas' and 'doing things better' in order to provide a vaster government.

*/ looking at how you might do things better or might do new things and these are within the nature of providing a vaster government or indeed providing services to the community ... it's really about doing things better or doing new things / broad approach to innovation ... it's a generation of new ideas which are then implemented both in and outside of the sector / in a very holistic and very broad sense ... products and services, we look at processes, we look at people and ... the environment, the climate, the culture, all those sorts of things / being different or being new ... solving a particular problem and it also needs to be well packaged and well presented /*

Innovation was described broadly by participants, to include technical, scientific or managerial innovation.

*/ innovation in the technical or scientific sense or in the managerial sense /*

In addition, innovation was perceived as 'thinking outside the square' to come up with a 'different' way of doing things. The importance of actually implementing the good ideas was also emphasised.

*/ to do things differently to the way in which they've been done in the past / doing things differently, thinking outside the square and analyzing, not analyzing everything to death but analyzing it enough and then having the creativity to think well that could better come up with something actually totally different, a kind of framework or a totally different kind of conceptual picture ... but it also requires that you have a capacity to do something with the creativity and the innovation, it's not just a bright spark idea but actually some kind of way of implementing it /*

The importance of focusing on outcomes and encouraging innovation by developing and trying new structures and processes, was included in the definitions given by Experts and Influencers.

*/ a preparedness to develop and try new structures, to orient towards new outcomes and basically also to look at new technological solutions. But I suppose it's really a preparedness to assess what really should be your desired outcome, what your preparedness to look afresh at how you best achieve those outcomes that you're striving for ... need to embrace new technology to achieve that ... need to embrace new structures ... need to embrace new processes / how to apply it, how to translate those core values into innovative outputs /*

There was a focus on the culture of the public sector when defining innovation, including the need to be 'daring' and holistic, looking at all facets of the business.

*/ Innovation involves daring to be different, daring to take a chance / not just product but ... all facets of the business and being ... creative ... involving a lot of people in a culture that everyone forwards ideas / I think it should extend to the social fabric of how you do things /*

A number of participants perceived that being evidence based was essential when describing and implementing innovation in the public sector.

*/ innovation in the public sector involves being on top of best practice around the world so having a good sense of how proposed policies have fared in other context, I guess most cases that would mean being aware of other states but also national evidence and perhaps to some extent of academic evidence / achieve some kind of renewal, fairly fundamental renewal in an organization ... so that it can respond to change, can be on the front foot rather than catching up, can anticipate what government might want so it can be really responsive ... innovative for me connotes evidence based advice /*

## General Perception of Innovation in WASPS

The general perceptions of innovation in the WASPS were generally not positive, with Experts and Influencers being critical about innovation from a strategic, organisational and workforce perspective.

Participants acknowledged that innovation was varied amongst the WASPS with a recognition that some agencies were very innovative and other 'appalling' and 'deplorable'.

*/ if I was to give a mark out of ten for the whole public sector, probably about four plus ... but there are some agencies who do it very very well and there are others who are absolutely appalling, deplorable / you've got some fairly mundane organizations/ a mix of organizations. Some are very good and some are bloody awful / I guess the preparedness or the capacity of agencies and individuals within agencies to do this is very different ... there's some agencies that I think have more of a culture which enables them to sort of think those issues through, there's others where we don't see, unfortunately that is part of an overall culture / Well pretty well non-existent / I'm actually not aware of any innovation happening in the WA public sector / it's true that Australia in general is bad at innovation / it's terrible in some ways and we should be doing a lot better / difficulty with the public sector of course is governed by politics and by politicians / what have they actually done? We've had a booming state bursting at the seams and you tell me one thing that they've done /very few had any core innovation or creativity programmes. There is a lot of rhetoric ... organizations that are trying to grapple whether they've been trying to grapple for 2 or 3 years ... to make their organization more innovative and a more innovative culture etc /*

It was perceived that there was little incentive within the WASPS to think and behave innovatively.

*/ there is no incentive in it for people to actually think, and to think outside the square /*

Whilst some participants perceived that there were innovative employees within the sector, it was felt that these people were not recognised for their efforts. This lack of recognition, as well as a poor awareness of innovation, was perceived to be a barrier to innovation within the WASPS.

*/ I get blown away sometimes by the things that people have done in agencies. And I guess the people in their field know about it but across the sector people don't ... real innovative things have happened and in some cases been recognized not only Australia wide but worldwide and picked up but you can be unaware of that. So my sense is that there's been a lot of innovation but not well recognized / I think the public sector actually is comprised of some very innovative people that I think at times it's not recognized as widely as perhaps it could be /*

There was a strong perception that the culture of the WASPS affected innovation causing a 'general reluctance' among public servants, who were able to put up barriers to being innovative.

*/ I think that there's a genuine reluctance to be innovative among public servants unless they're put into a very creative environment where that's urged and encouraged out of them. But it's not something that comes spontaneously is my general experience / It's very easy for the public servants to put up walls / I think it's wrong to look to public servants who see their role as... serving the government of the day to provide that inspiration for innovation because in my experience it hasn't come /*

Participants believed that the sector had not come to terms with the need for change and innovation, and a greater understanding of innovation and its importance in the sector.

*/ I don't think the public sector's really come to terms with how fast things are changing and we attempt to run to keep up in some areas and others we're leading the change. So it's just vital I think. I don't think now that with the rate of change we can do anything other than be innovative / Until that starts to happen it's not something that'll just spring up or you can dictate to people, you can go forth and be innovative. I think there needs to be a better understanding of what it is and what it means and how it fits with being who you are as a public servant /*

Perceptions of innovation in the WASPS included those related to employees of the service. The 'type of people' attracted to the WASPS came under some scrutiny and criticism, and many Experts and Influencers felt that the sector employed some of the most un-innovative employees.

*/ There's little or no innovation within the public sector. ... it stems really from the type of people that are attracted to the public sector and sadly the ones who show any innovation and show any ideas and the like are snapped up or choose to leave ... I think there are states that are more innovative particularly in our industry but WA's not one of them / often those individuals find life very frustrating and go elsewhere / are some of the most un-innovative people I've come across in my whole life. They're worst than the worst bureaucrats I've come across / they all espouse innovation and creativity in the corporate values it says and we actually asked some of those people, 'well what do you mean by creativity and innovation as a corporate value' and at various senior levels they really cannot articulate that /*

In regards to the type of innovation, there was a perception from Experts and Influencers that while research and development was going well, creativity and innovation was not strong within the sector, due to the Government being risk averse.

*/ innovative things happen but it's not happening in a very formal structure, it's more in through the R & D, more in the scientific side there is no real great breakthroughs ... creativity and innovation is not a very strong thing in the public sector because this public sector and this government is very risk averse so therefore you tend to get the adaptive type continuous improvement more than the, there'd be more novel breakthrough type of innovation / I don't think the public sector does very well and therefore to that extent I don't think is particularly innovative as it's not very good at looking at new information / In most of the agencies I've been in there's been very little a) capacity and b) interest in innovation based on best practice research and so on /*



## Importance of Innovation in the WASPS

Experts and Influencers all perceived innovation to be important for the WASPS, with 'critical' being used often to describe its importance. There were broad implications perceived of its importance, with an emphasis on being future focused. Additionally, participants believed that innovation was important for the WASPS in achieving the 'greater good' and better outcomes for the community.

*/ Critically important if things are going to be done better / Critical. Absolutely critical / Critical. Something which isn't given enough priority or scope particularly by politicians in giving people encouragement to be innovative but it's all about being efficient and effective. If you're innovative and your innovation works ... its for the community at large and that's what public service should be about / it's absolutely critical that we have a dynamic public sector and always look forward, that challenge to innovate, that research, then translate that into things that the community at large can use to effectively create a better outcome for the community / they all need to be innovative and future ... depends very much on those agencies /*

Participants also perceived that innovation was vital for the WASPS in order to attract quality people into the public sector.

*/ I think it's vital because if we're not innovative and not seen to be innovative then we won't attract the quality people into the public sector ... It will be self fulfilling prophesy you end up with the less, by definition less innovative people coming into the public sector /*

## **Perceptions of Experts and Influencers**

Experts and Influencers made many comments about innovation in the WASPS. In particular because of the nature of the participants being 'Experts' and 'Influencers', the researcher encouraged the exploration of areas within the realm of expertise and explored their views on the themes that emerged in phase one of the study.

Similarly to the responses in phase one, perceptions by Experts and Influencers were categorised into three distinct but interrelated categories being cultural, structural and human resource factors which represents a way of viewing innovation adapted from Robbins, et al (2006). These categories and the themes that emerged from the analysis will now be reported in no particular priority order.

## **Structural Issues**

### ***Resources for Innovation***

Resources for innovation were raised as a barrier to innovation in the first phase of data collection related to flexibility and availability of resources. In contrast Experts and Influencers perceived this to be a 'whinge' by Leaders. In fact it was felt that leaders within the sector needed to work cooperatively with Treasury and be constructive about their proposals to fund innovation.

*/ this stuff you're hearing about Treasury is grossly overstated, grossly overstated ... it's a whinge and the fact that people have not done enough to try and work with Central Agencies/ in terms of investment, if a CEO can demonstrate that an investment actually does give rise to efficiencies in terms of better use of money, then provided they're constructive about their proposal and persuasive, I would say 8 to 9 times out of 10 they'd win /*

Experts and Influencers felt that Leaders in the sector needed to be more persuasive and present compelling arguments in order to have resources allocated for innovation.

*/ they've got to be persuasive to those who make decisions about providing them with more resources. So for instance if they were to go to government to say look, we think we could, through new technology or through new innovative ideas, give rise to significant improvement service delivery ... provided the case has got substance to it, most times it's agreed...often. It's not agreed because the case being put forward is not a compelling case rather than people are standing on the hose and that's the difference /*

It was perceived that Leaders had poor skills in influencing the allocation of resources for innovation. Further there was the recognition that a successful track record was important for Leaders to ensure that Ministers have confidence in them and their ability.

*/ It's not just a skill at the moment. It's not just a case of coming forward and saying I've got this good idea ... it's about their track record in meeting government objectives and meeting government requirements over a period of time so people have got confidence in what they do and my experience is with those CEO's and indeed those Ministers where the decision makers on resources had confidence in them, they almost always got their way / all agencies have got the flexibility under the budget arrangements to move resources if they wish and to even propose new forms for activity within the budget they've been given providing two things; one is they don't exceed their budget and the second one is, they do deliver what the government wants them to deliver. And within those two constraints there's a fair amount of room for CEO's if they want to try and do something new /*

Further, the ability of the CEO to negotiate effectively with Treasury for the initiation of an innovative idea or program, was seen as crucial to successful innovation.

*/ if you really believe that that minor level of investment will generate your return of 5 or 6 times over then in the budget of your size you can find \$5 million and no-one was stopping them yet many at a time they would argue Treasury didn't give us authority to do it or government didn't approve us doing that sort of work. Well I can't imagine any government who would say no ... when putting forward a proposition that you could say 4 or 5 times over your investment ... which the population at large would applaud /*

Having the flexibility to free up resources was seen as crucial and this was seen by Experts and Influencers as going hand in hand with the accountability of leaders in resource use and negotiation with Treasury.

*/ is having adequate resourcing to effectively free up some resources from day to day activity to think about the future and how one can plan a future / of course if you had a pot of money to go with it you would actually put in place support for particular projects that have a high chance of paying off even though lots of things can be done with not much money /*

There was a recognition that technological advances contribute to the cost of providing a public service and therefore decreasing the capacity for re-allocation of budget to kick start innovation.

*/ fraught with problems in terms of ... service delivery because you have technology advancement almost on a daily basis, that technology advancement is normally associated with increasing costs rather than reducing cost /*

Again the concept of 'whinging' was mentioned when describing the reaction of Leaders to the intellectual property policy and sale of assets, as a lack of ability of leaders to convince Government that they were using the proceeds in a way which benefited the community it served.

*/ I have to say to you that ... most of this is just sheer whinging. Most of the agencies who wanted to sell assets could do so provided ... rules are really clear, provided you could demonstrate to the government you were going to use the proceeds in a way the government was happy for you to use the proceeds, fine, off you go. Where most agencies fell down was they could never do that. They could never satisfy the government that the proceeds should be used in a way they want them used so who do they blame?...Treasury /*

## **Bureaucracy**

Some Experts and Influencers referred to the WASPS as being 'incredibly bureaucratic' perceiving that the complexity, particularly of structure was affecting innovation negatively.

*/ The structure is incredibly bureaucratic / I think we've got to get our management structures right / you need to move away from these rigidly hierarchical structures / As long as they've got these highly structured hierarchical organizations I think that's antithetical to fostering a culture of innovation ... we need to have some new type structures /*

Conversely, some participants commented that while the WASPS was a form of bureaucracy, Leaders within this system used 'bureaucracy' as an excuse for lack of innovation.

*/ and that's not a big bureaucracy by any standard ... but what it needs is good management / which frankly hasn't been managed well for many many years / It's just simple administration yet so many times did I hear ... 'this is huge bureaucracy and it's awfully complex and frankly we have to battle day to day just for the issues of the day' ... It's just an excuse. Just get on with it /*

Participants also commented that within the bureaucracy there was a need to establish clear accountability measures and set clear objectives regarding innovative outcomes.

*/ the current Chief Executive has taken some steps in recent times in terms of structure, where he's just done a simple structure of that whole operation, where he's got a real chance of getting some orderly innovative work ... putting in authorities with accountabilities and saying to the workforce as a whole, these are the objectives we want to achieve now / The largest problem with [WASPS] bureaucracy is that people aren't given clarity about their role and they aren't provided with clarity as to their authority. What can they do? What decision making power do they have within the constraints of their roles and responsibilities and for what are they going to be held accountable/*

Further, participants perceived that it was the people within the bureaucracy that were capable of producing innovation regardless of the structure.

*/ I have a view generally that it doesn't matter what your structures are, it's the people in it that will make it work well. If you can get the right people ... it will work regardless of what the structure is / Structurally they've got it wrong as well and so structure really becomes quite important because if you've got the wrong people in the positions then how it's delivered is more critical /*

### ***Department of Premier and Cabinet***

The role of central agencies, particularly that of the Department of Premier and Cabinet was discussed by Experts and Influencers who felt that there was very little opportunity for the Premier, Cabinet and Treasury and Finance to influence innovation within the sector because they were more focused on reacting to issues as they arose.

*/ It's a catchall department [Premier and Cabinet]. The department has some core functions that remain irrespective of who the Premier is or who the Government is / determined in the first instance by government commitments, government election commitments and secondly in response to, i.e. reactive to issues that emerge / In the first instance it's [innovation] about the system so ... it's about the Public Sector Management Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet to establish that system and make sure it's delivered /*

### **Advice to Government**

Experts and Influencers made significant mention of the role of Government in enhancing innovation within the WASPS. In particular the role of 'advice giving' to Government was discussed. Participants believed that it was the WASPS leader's responsibility to give good advice to Ministers about innovation even if they didn't want to hear or acknowledge the advice.

*/ That's a perennial problem in the public service. Politicians only want to hear good news stories, in other words they only want to win votes and it's very hard to give Minister's advice that's bad news . 'No Minister you can't do that because it's illegal or in my view you don't have the power to make that decision ' , they're hard things to say to Minister's/ sometimes you have to say 'look Minister, my advice is that you don't do that' and he says 'well that's what I'm going to do', 'well OK my strong advice if you want placed on the record' and they'll say '... would you mind stop taking notes right now ... they say don't take notes .../*

The term 'fearless advice' was used to describe the approach that Leaders needed to take in giving advice to Ministers about innovation. This was despite the fact that Ministers were not always responsive to this advice.

*/ there needs to be this capacity in agencies to keep the Minister's innovative, policy advice based on best practice and good research with good evidence ... Minister's are often not responsive to getting good advice and fearless advice ... as a senior bureaucrat you've got to decide where you stand, you've got to have very clearly thought through ... you've got to have a very clear set of values and I think a very strong one then there's got to be lines beyond which you won't go or you call it like it is and take the consequences ... uncomfortable life at times, that's true of most things where you've got those sort of ethical and philosophical dilemmas to deal with /*

### **Evaluation**

Participants perceived that the provision of evaluation mechanisms to examine innovative strategies in regards to their effectiveness was important. However it was felt that these evaluative mechanisms were the first casualties of restructuring and downsizing. There was a perception that the evaluation of innovation within the WASPS was not seen as important. Participants felt that they needed to have a constant review process that allowed the evaluation of innovative programs and policy.

*/ evaluation groups that are doing the kind of work in agencies, but again these are costs and they are often the casualties of restructures, downsizing, budget cuts / the other thing I think those agencies need to have, if they're really going to innovate, is they need a constant review process. So, yes we've innovated a program or a policy, we've brought it in, it's been running now for 5 years. Has it succeeded? Is what we're doing successful? Are we in the mark? ... Are those policies working? It's not hard to find out /*



### ***Change of Government / Minister***

There was recognition from participants that a change of Government or a change of Minister can be significantly disruptive for innovation with the WASPS. Changes such as these were seen as 'majorly dislocating for a public sector'. Additionally it was perceived that this was also the case in the change of CEO of a Department.

*/ The first one's change of government and change of Minister / there is no doubt that [change of Government and Minister] just can, it doesn't in all agencies, ... this of course can be majorly dislocating for a public sector / so what chance have we got of having innovative people in senior positions when a whim and a wish government can choose, with the changes of government can just decide who the head of public service is, who is the leader, don't forget, this person who serves and guides innovation! /*

### ***Goals of Government***

Participants perceived that in order for a Government to encourage an innovative WASP, it needed to have a clear set of outcomes.

*/ That was a government where they certainly got on and did things, they had an agenda, they had a clear set of outcomes /*

Experts and Influencers were very critical of the Government perceiving that there were significant shortcomings in setting clear goals and accountabilities to guide innovation. Because the Government lacked any statement of strategy it had no way of defending its innovation strategy against lobby groups.

*/ I think Government has actually been tracking down this path of not having clear plans, not having clear accountabilities and relationships and it's been convenient for them to do that. ... one of the great shortcomings of Government is we don't know what they're trying to do / there are no clear plans. We don't have a statement of strategy. We have clouded outcomes, nothing which has got the sharpness of measurable outcomes and as a consequence, the government is at the mercy of the loudest minority lobby group ... and as a consequence of that they don't have a rational place to fall back on and often they concede and they give in to the lobby groups /*

### **Terms of Government**

Interestingly, many participants had a perception that innovation was affected by the term of the state Government and the timing of the elections. In particular many Experts and Influencers felt that the public service slowed down and became 'more conservative' before or immediately after an election.

*/ And what you find is while there is a 4 year term ... that people, public servants become more conservative as you become closer to an election and then very conservative immediately after an election until they ascertain the new government or the new Minister's view on things / so out of each 4 year cycle you can virtually write off a year / In part that relates to the timing in the electoral cycle. You have far greater capacity to do things differently and to take on established interest groups in order to do things differently after an election than you do before an election / innovation stops when there's an election called / the facility to call early elections can stimey innovation because it stops people from knowing that they have a long period over which they can plan /*

Specifically, the perception was that during the time before an election when the Government 'dampens down' innovation the public sector tended to breed risk averse behaviour in its public servants.

*/ that's the nature of it and that's just the public servants realizing that there might be change, not only in personnel but also the political colour of the government they have to deal with. ... the political cycle I think plays a big role but it also generally dampens down innovation or preparedness to stick your neck out to do something a bit differently, that's ... classified as risk averse people. The public sector breeds that /*

## **Federal Government**

Many comparisons were made of the WASPS with the Federal Government, some favorable, others not so. In regards to innovation, some Experts and Influencers perceived that the WASPS had far greater capacity for innovation than did the Federal Government because of its focus on service delivery rather than policy.

*/ I think the bureaucracy has greater scope and innovation than the Federal level / But in the State government compared to the Commonwealth government ... we had so much more service delivery agencies whereas the Commonwealth has less of those and more of the public policy approach ... We have a mixture of both and I think a lot of the innovation occurs in the sense of the service delivery implementation side of things /*

In comparison, it was felt that CEOs in the Federal Government had far greater capacity to lead innovation because they have more autonomy and a clearer and stronger relationship between the Minister and the CEO.

*/ In Western Australia the bureaucracy is closer to government than it is at the Federal level and the Federal level in terms of running organizations, CEO's have got greater autonomy to do simply because they're not as close ... Innovation in terms of big policy issues. I suppose the only thing I'd observe about the Federal bureaucracy and relationship with the government it seems to be a stronger clearer relationship between the Minister and Chief Executive than it does appear to be here / I don't know really how that [capacity to innovate] compares with other state governments but I know it compares very unfavorably with Federal government /*

In regards to the effect that policy making has on innovation in the WASPS, a participant perceived that the WASPS was much more prepared to involve the community and do the 'engaging stuff' and 'capacity building'. In comparison they thought that the Federal Government had a more 'structured' research based approach and greater intellectual rigour behind their policy making.

*/ I do think the Commonwealth has a far more sort of structured intellectual research based approach to public policy ... that can be a positive and a negative. It's positive in that it's got the intellectual rigour behind it ... sometimes we lack. But when you're trying to do a model that might be a bit more around engaging the community then all of that sort of research and analysis can cause people to overlook the community perspective if their local community is saying something that doesn't fit their model or their statistics / And that doesn't come out of a rigorous sort of policy analysis approach / we [the WASPS] could probably learn something from them [the Federal Government] in terms of their development of innovative public policy but they could probably learn something from us [the State Government] about the more grass roots service type areas because it's not their forte/*

### ***Interdepartmental***

As in the first phase of the study, interdepartmental cooperation was perceived to play a crucial role in innovation in the WASPS. Some participants were very critical of the lack of interdepartmental initiatives in the sector. They compared this to the Federal Government where CEOs had a clear mandate and absolute authority to achieve innovation with cooperation with other departments.

*/ I think that's one of the great weaknesses in the public sector here ... we don't do interdepartmental work well ... I don't think the authority is clear enough. Where there has to be interdepartmental work, it's not as clear as it is for instance at the Commonwealth level where the head of an agency has got absolute authority ... Cabinet decision is for Minister X to have this work done through an interdepartmental committee chaired by Chief Executive Officer Y and you've got clear timeframes and that work is followed through /*

Participants discussed the strategies that had to be used by Leaders when interdepartmental cooperation was not achieved by public servants, saying that CEOs used their 'authority' and liaised directly with other CEOs to determine why cooperation was not occurring between Departments.

*/ you did have ... to belt up on agencies if they weren't delivering but quite often we used our authority / We knew the outcomes we wanted to get and we used everything to get them so if an agency is finding that it's not able to get information from another agency then there are ways and means of getting it. One of which is for a CEO to ring his or her counterpart and just say look, what's wrong with your agency ... one thing this government has done well is it's got it's Director's General now around a table ... and I would be very surprised if one of those members rang another and said look, I'm having difficulty getting information out of your agency it wouldn't be addressed /*

Much was said by participants about the perceived duplication across departments and lack of clarity of role, which hindered innovation within the WASPS. The suggestion that larger agencies were more effective in innovation because of lack of duplication was discussed.

*/ There is duplication across departments because there's not clarity of role of agencies and there's some celebrated cases ... is just a screaming mess and as a consequence ... inefficiency / go back to the idea of having smaller agencies to bring agencies further together and get larger agencies because at the end of the day ... this is only WA, this isn't New York state so it's not that big and to me it would get rid of a lot of duplication /*

The importance of creating good working relationships with people from other departments was emphasized, as was the need for public servants to have a sense of public duty.

*/ I went out of my way to create relationships with people and for most of the time we had pretty good working relationships / select people who are prepared to be collaboratively and to do a cross-agency and whole of government approaches and not say this is my territory and I'm going to be King of the castle here ... my sense of public duty ... So I'm not sure size and structure matter as much as what's going on inside people's heads ... you can enforce some of that to happen but you would never amalgamate it enough to make it happen at a whole of government level / you need that cross-sector stuff /*

The willingness of employees to operate out of the realms of their 'silo' was perceived as being an important factor in innovation, especially when an issue requires a multi-agency response across different agencies and groups.

*/ I wouldn't say structure's irrelevant, that's not true but increasingly my sense is that the innovation required is no longer that old style in your little silo doing your thing and innovating. You need to think across the whole spectrum. Across different agencies and different groups of people require a multi-agency response so in some ways being small helps with that, being fragmented doesn't help with it but the fragmentation doesn't matter if both the capacity and the willingness to do that across sector stuff /*

### **Workload**

Experts and Influencers perceived that workload could be a both a barrier and an enabler for innovation in the WASPS. In terms of workload being a barrier, the day to day pressures were felt to affect the time employees needed to explore innovative strategies.

*/ workloads can be both a barrier and an incentive but my judgment's in the main they are a barrier because the day to day pressures force people to focus on day to day issues which mean they haven't got that free time to explore widely. The counter side of that coin is ... if you're under that much pressure sometimes you've got to find shortcuts and those shortcuts may affect innovation ... I think where people are inundated with the sheer volume of work that that limits them / You're so busy getting on with the sheer volumes of day to day things that sometimes it's difficult to rise up above that and embrace something else ... can you afford to take your foot off the pedal on the way you're going in order to consult the road map / the general public service, it is in the main, overstretched, fighting too many day to day bush fires, can't think ahead, a lack of strategic planning, a lot of people don't quite know how to go about continuous improvement, innovation in terms of at the margin as opposed to breakthrough /*

### **Turnover and Corporate Knowledge**

There was significant discussion about the effects of staff turnover in the WASPS, particularly at the leadership level, which has resulted in a loss of corporate knowledge. Participants believed that this has resulted in the sector being 'devoid of talent'.

*/ There are agencies where most of the intellectual horsepower has gone / they [director level leaders] are really people who have got the intellectual horsepower, got good experience, 10, 15 years of experience and manage teams, coordinate teams, facilitate innovation. They were the first to go when the money got tight / I'm still of the view ... the public sector over the last 2 years has lost a lot in terms of intellectual horsepower ... innovating in their own areas where others are just devoid of talent and they just can't do it / A lot have got payouts ... A lot of them retired ... and a lot of them became a consultant /*

## **Restructuring**

Participants in both phases discussed the effects of restructuring on innovation. Experts and Influencers have a variety of perceptions and importantly questioned whether restructuring in itself was an innovation. It was perceived that restructuring actually had the reverse effect on the enhancement of innovation and in particular participants felt that instead of there being a lot of innovative activity that people were expending time and energy around restructuring and reorganization.

*/ how the public sector structures itself, responds structurally to change. So we've got things like restructures occurring constantly in government agencies which is seen by the political wing of government and usually the leadership of the agencies as being innovative ... how do we position ourselves in terms like agility, responsiveness and all that sort of stuff I use to justify these restructures. My personal view is that I think that's not innovation that almost has the reverse effect on what you would hope innovation would achieve / working through of all of that [restructuring] and what that means to people is probably really important because around them, structures change, but that shouldn't impede the innovation ... a lot of activity around restructuring and reorganizing as opposed to a lot of activity around being truly creative and innovative and following through on it /*

Participants discussed the effect of restructuring within the bureaucracy of the WASPS and identified that some employees had not made the transition following the restructuring.

*/ One of the things you notice in organizations is a lot of them have long legacies. They've been through a number of different change. You may have [an employee] that's come out of two or three re-structures ago ... and they never ever adapted to the fact that there's been one change let alone there's been two or three changes and they hold on steadfastly almost to a culture that they brought with them from the original agency you know a decade or more ago /*



Experts and Influencers also perceived that despite substantial downsizing of the public sector that there is little impact as long as the agencies can attract 'bright, innovative people' into the WASPS.

*/ substantial downsizing of the public service and I don't think that necessarily impacted or I don't think those decisions did impact on government innovation. The important thing is that lead agencies are still able to get bright, innovative people and that they're still rewarding them for speaking out /*

Experts and Influencers felt that there was significant frustration among public servants about the constant restructuring within the WASPS, with some agencies being restructured every six months. Participants referred to a philosophy of 'endemic restructualism' that inhibited innovation.

*/ [in regards to the frustration of public servants] Partly this endemic restructualism, that goes on all the time. I know a lot of people ... who if they don't have a restructured every 6 months they're slipping. And a lot of other agencies had that same problem because this froth and bubble that goes forward or stands in place of innovation, it has the opposite effect, it gets in the way of there being action /*

When restructuring occurs, participants felt that specifically the public servants and groups who contribute to innovation through policy, research and planning were the first groups that tended to be affected by restructuring.

*/ and here's another criticism I have of restructuring. The first groups that tend to go in restructures are what are seen as the overhead groups like policy and research groups ... policy and planning people who's job it is and are actually protected to do it, who actually do research, who look at innovation, who's job it is to go and find out what's the best way /*

The human cost of restructuring was perceived to have an impact on innovation because of the high attrition of quality people.

*/ because various disparate bits have been merged and they're still struggling with the sort of cultural complex that is going on within the department and they're losing, some of the best people are going /*

### **Centralisation Policy**

Participants believed that the constant reiterations between devolution and centralisation caused confusion within the WASPS. This confusion affected innovation because of the cynicism and uncertainty this caused among staff.

*/ I think probably people are somewhat confused by some of the literature that talks about what we used to call new managerialism ... devolving everything and things tend to go in cycles and so people get a bit cynical about all of that, OK you've devolved everything, let the Manager manage and then oops, no we'll centralize it again to achieve coordination /*

### **Public Sector Management Act**

The Public Sector Management Act was perceived as an impediment to innovation because it was perceived as protecting 'incompetence' and 'laziness' amongst public servants.

*/ The common complaint that you'll probably hear, and a lot of this is ill informed unfortunately, will be about the Public Sector Management Act. Again a direct outcome of the Royal Commission recommendation / Most probably the biggest impediment is the public sector management act where staff that I would sack for incompetence, laziness or whatever are protected /*

### ***Isolation of Western Australia***

The effect of the isolation of Western Australia's public sector was not seen as a barrier for innovation by participants. Rather this has led to 'improvisation' and 'problem solving' which have contributed to innovation.

*/ Well I think our public sector is quite innovative. I think that the isolation of Western Australia and ... the poverty of Western Australia in the past has led to a degree of self-sufficiency and improvisation and cooperation and problem solving that means that we muddle through pretty well and we adapt pretty regularly and there is a reasonably cooperative climate here /*

### ***Output Focus***

Participants had varying views about the measurement of public service and the current focus on outputs which do not provide any incentives for innovation. Experts and Influencers perceived that there was no reason to innovate when the public service was not measured on outcomes and that any attempts at innovation in the area of outputs would result in staff cuts.

*/ if you look at all the Annual Reports they're all output driven and many of them are input driven so I would think that there is probably a decade before you will get to the stage in this government bureaucracy where you really see any incentive for innovation in that you're not measured by it so why should you do anything about it / They're not measured by outcomes and because they're not measured by outcomes, there's really basically no reason to innovate. While you're driven by outputs ... then often the ... last thing you want to do is innovate on the output because that will ultimately cut your staff ... so you don't want to do that / quite frankly there is far too much in the public sector and particularly in some agencies where their focus is process, absolute process. The focus on outcomes just isn't there /*

Further, participants criticised the fact that many public servants within the WASPS had little knowledge about the management of outcomes let alone the fact that you needed to 'innovate to get the right outcome'.

*/ I think there are definitely people in the political spheres that worry about these things but in general there is no ... great understanding of even what an outcome is let alone that you need to innovate to get the right outcomes /*

### **Whole Of Government Approach**

A whole of Government approach was recognised by participants as an essential managerial innovation within the WASPS. This approach was seen as vital to address the temptation of public servants to work within 'silos' and to reduce competition and enhance collaboration.

*/ innovation in the managerial sense is absolutely essential ... there are various obvious things ... like whole of government approach in many many areas / but there's a lot of literature around that says that the country that will rule the world in 100 years is the one that has an absolutely committed whole of Government approach and you lose so many opportunities by having these silos and these people competing, there's nothing wrong with people competing with each other but if you don't compete, if you don't collaborate when you're supposed to collaborate and compete when you're supposed to compete then you lose a lot of opportunities /*

The resistance to a whole of Government approach was evident to participants at many levels of the WASPS. Experts and Influencers believed that opposition existed at Ministerial level in that Ministers did not want to lose responsibility for initiatives, but it also existed at Director General and senior committee level where people were reluctant to 'think more broadly'.

*/ there are a lot of opportunities lost by not having a whole of government approach to things and then you'd say well, how are we going to put the right structures in place to enable that to happen and you find the opposition to a whole of government approach exists at many levels, it exists at the Minister level because they don't actually want it ... They don't want to lose responsibility for something that's going on. You find that at the Director General level because they don't want to change the structure that's there and you find it at the senior kind of Committee type level where they really want to just concentrate on the thing that they're there for and not think more broadly /*

Experts and Influencers felt that to achieve innovation in the WASPS that a strategic view of what the needs of the state are in 10 years time needed to be taken.

*/ if you're going to have a whole of government approach, you say well at what level of strategy and thought do I need to do that ... to say well what do we want the economy of this state to look like in 10 years time and so let's take all the issues that will have a major impact on that and ensure that there's cross-fertilisation between all the decisions that are made in those regards /*

### **Seed Funding**

Experts and Influencers believed that innovation could be enhanced by the injection of capital into potentially innovative projects and that there seemed to be a lack of opportunity to do creative things with new ideas.

*/ I believe is the big problem ... how do you get ideas to the stage where people are prepared to invest in them and that's all about an injection of capital at the right level / let us have a fund that enables us to train people, to inject relatively small amounts of capital and get it to a stage where it can actually take a proposition to the next stage of investors to get on with it and that generates more equity for the people involved and it cuts the technical risk. / What there seems to be a lack of is the ability to take a bit of knowledge and actually do something with it /*

## ***Economic Modeling***

Participants felt that there was a need for modeling in the WASPS that could demonstrate the potential economic benefit of innovation. Experts and Influencers talked of models that existed elsewhere and Governments that had used models to demonstrate productivity gains and cost benefit analyses.

*/ Treasury here has no economic models of the State as opposed to say Queensland and New South Wales and Victoria now... they can tell you what the productivity gains have been ... make a case for what that would mean for multi-factor productivity or whatever ... There's no economic model in this State and so it's hard to make any kind of argument to Treasury that technology has actually made a difference / actually select three projects ... and do a benefit cost analysis and the results are just astounding, just unbelievable. Well we presented this to Treasury and nobody said a word /*

Participants perceived that an effective model would allow public servants to make the case for innovative initiatives to Treasury.

*/ try to figure out how you would make the case to Treasury that an investment of X dollars is worth whatever the hell in Treasury speak ... you first of all have to convince Treasury that a model is interesting / what the productivity increases in this State were in the last year ... don't know /*

However, when referring to the temptation to act independently of Government and find a suitable economic model, Experts and Influencers perceived that the outcome was to risk finding one which was not compatible with the thinking of Treasury.

*/ the risk is that if you do it independently of Treasury for instance, you ultimately end up with one that's not acceptable so how you work your way through it / it's a difficult issue anyway because a lot of people don't believe in models /*

Experts and Influencers perceived that there were plenty of indicators, usually outputs, that were available but very few important ones which measured whether a difference had been made and whether the innovation actually had an impact on the economy.

*/ you can measure what the unemployment rate is. You look at all the statistics that come out on Western Australia and they're all about how many houses have been built, what the car sales rate, you know it's all about those, they're outputs, they're not outcomes and so people are interested in what the outputs of all this has been and they hope that will track the economy in some way whereas the actual impact on the economy in terms of multi-factor productivity which is the only thing that is really important now ... is not measured, it can't be measured, there is no data /*

### **Marketing Innovation**

Participants recognised that the WASPS has some reluctance when it came to showcasing their innovation and that in many cases employees and agencies were not willing to market their innovation.

*/ I don't think there's a culture of standing up and pointing out what you've done. The accolades come, when there's a formal process people don't seem to hold back, they will apply for things like the Premier's awards but without a formal process there's not a mechanism for them probably to showcase their innovations /*

### **Innovation from Elsewhere**

It was perceived by Experts and Influencers that innovation could result from public servants adapting reforms from elsewhere to stimulate innovation. Participants felt that the WASPS was not successful seeking out information, data and research from elsewhere.

*/ when I think of innovation ... public servants who are able to see places where things are done differently and better than the status quo and then suggest to politicians that they could usefully take on reforms from elsewhere / There are very few institutionalized ways for the public sector to get access to new information, new data, new research, what's best practice elsewhere in the world / that's not been a strong point of the agency, there's fairly blinkered view about things, and an almost introspective view /*

However it was also perceived that caution needed to be exercised about adopting 'fads' from elsewhere and that employing the 'inventions of highly paid consultants' was a fairly unsophisticated way of enhancing innovation within the WASPS.

*/ I think innovation is not as simple as picking up the current fads in terms of management systems or management ideas / at times there's been ideas percolated around the system, fads in organizing things, in performance management, in management theory that seem to pop up out of the woodwork regularly and usually are the inventions of highly paid consultants, who then globetrot and spook their wears and while we adapt and adopt some of those things. I don't necessarily think again that they're particularly innovative / it seemed like an innovative idea but really by the time it got to us it was a bit of a tired idea in my view and was a fairly crude model to apply to a sophisticated organization /*

### **Private Sector**

Experts and Influencers discussed the perception that the private sector could achieve more innovation than the public sector, and that there was a tendency to outsource many things to the private sector without consideration of the innovative capabilities within the WASPS.



*/ there's a big generalization, or a set of philosophical statements like the private sector should do as much as it can and the public sector should do as little as possible ... if the private sector can do it, they should do it and so you outsource anything that can be done by the private sector / be driven by that kind of political philosophy that private sector rules OK and public sector should be contracted to the bare minimum of regulation and a bit of oversight of the private sector doing its thing /*

### **Political Interference**

Experts and Influencers discussed the concept of political interference from many different angles. Firstly, there was the perceived interference with senior public sector appointments despite the rhetoric about this. It was now felt that there was significant political interference in the recruitment of innovative public servants.

*/ So you've got things like SES's ... Public Services Commissions and classic independent employer notion which was meant to buffer these things from political influence. You've got far more influence by political arm over appointments certainly at Chief Executive level but even now the SES level and much more capacity for there to be fingers in the pie of the public sector /*

Further, participants perceived that innovation was affected by the inability to give 'frank and fearless' advice to Ministers and that this was related to the concept that the WASPS was meant to be an 'independent employer', when in fact there was perceived to be considerable political interference.

*/ I've been starting to say well I think it's time to start rethinking this notion of an independent employer that can protect against some of this stuff and give people what I call the capacity to be frank and fearless once more because that was the traditional notion that you were frank and fearless in your advice to Minister's, we're not anymore. People are usually looking over their shoulder and even very senior bureaucrats ... are saying I didn't feel like I could be frank and fearless, I'm not that stupid! /*

Participants talked about the effects of political cycles on the appointment of innovative leaders. It was felt that political parties were now operating similarly to the US system where public servants were turfed out with a change of Government and as a result, movers and shakers, that is, those who were innovative in their approach, would not always survive elections or changes of government.

*/ I think it's got consequences that we haven't really thought through that weren't fully appreciated. And now both sides of politics are saying 'oh crikey, this works for us but damn this also works for them when they come back in'. So they can get the public sector to be more responsive, they can turf out all our guys and they can bring in their guys. So it's more like the well recognized and explicit US system now ... where there's regime changes with changes of government whereas there didn't used to be and you had your mandarins that survived for decades who were seen as very credible and respected by both sides of politics. Now it's very rare for the movers and shakers in government at Chief Executive level to survive elections or changes of government and yes I do think that's a bad thing /*

Examples were given by Experts and Influencers of leaders within the WASPS who were being 'displaced' by Ministers and Government for speaking their mind and for giving unwelcome advice to Government. Participants felt this affected innovation because of the lack of evidence based advice.

*/ I've been arguing for there to be some buffer so going back to perhaps the traditional idea of a independent employer for all senior public servants to buffer them ... certainly SES people and staff generally should be employed by an independent Commissioner / it's in the interests of politicians to have an independent public service because what you do want if you really want to make good decisions is really good, evidence based, independent fearless advice ... you need to have people who are actually capable of saying it like it is and often you don't get reward, in fact you get turfed if you are known as someone who speaks their mind and these people ...who are being displaced at the moment are typically those sorts of people. They are the frank and fearless and they're not welcome anymore and that is as I say a great tragedy in our system at the moment so it's a barrier to innovation /*

There were perceptions by Experts and Influencers about political influence on the WASPS, specifically the effect this had on job security, turnover of innovative CEOs and general risk aversity in the public sector system.

*/ I think the problem is that [in this state] introvert gets up to the top of the public sector which tends to be risk adverse, not rock the boat and very much 'Yes Minister', that's the way you survive and in that culture it's very hard to be very creative and innovative ... I think it's a system rather than the people that puts the suppression on it / I think you'll find that having a very risk averse public sector and one who tells the CEO's what to do, the good ones don't stay ... found so many very very good minds that left the public sector because of this more control by the political agendas and the advisors / I had advisors wanting his head, they wanted the review to get rid of him, to get his job / If a CEO is in that position he's going to be in survival mode not creative mode /*

### **Systematic Approach**

Experts and Influencers felt that to successfully enhance innovation in the WASPS that a systematic approach to innovation was needed. This approach included the implementation of the innovation 'building blocks' including giving attention to the culture and the processes of the organisation.

*/ treated as a whole, as a concept ... you need to have some sort of methodology to look at it ... Pull it apart in a very scientific or rigorous way ... If any senior executive is serious about innovation, that would have to be top priority and translate that to the workforce, communicate that, then you need a strategy ... have some sort of innovation strategy, although they'll say it's embedded within the business plan but it's not quite like that. You need some sort of innovative matrix if you're serious / [in regards to a systemic] methodology... You put the first building blocks, the next one and you gradually build it up in a logical way and ... more macro or ... culture side of innovation is you put the building blocks and you start building, you start building that culture, building reform and processes /*

### ***Ideas Generation***

Participants perceived that to generate innovation a system was needed to capture ideas. This included the generation of many ideas of which only some would be successfully implemented.

*/ I think if an organization puts in a formal structural approach ... they bring out things which are quite breakthrough and not risky but most organizations in government ... didn't have a process to set those ideas up, to capture those ideas ... to get breakthrough ideas you need 3000 ideas /*

### ***Networks of Influence***

Participants perceived the use of networks to be a crucial aspect to innovation. Leaders needed to use these networks to influence, to push a point of view and to advocate for their agency and innovative ideas.

*/ one of the criteria is in fact that everybody has to build those sorts of networks, has to be able to act as an advocate for their agency, an advocate for their ideas and then use whatever efforts and means possible to push a point of view to get a good result /*

### **Summary of Structural Issues**

As detailed, there are wide and varied themes emerging from the perceptions by Experts and Influencers regarding the structural category. As with the previous phase, themes within the cultural category will now be discussed.

## Cultural Issues

### *Relationship between CEO and Minister*

The relationship between the CEO and the Minister was discussed extensively by Experts and Influencers as being a significant factor in regards to innovation in the WASPS. Firstly, and rather obviously, the consequence of a poor relationship between the CEO and Minister was seen as significant in terms of innovation.

*/ It's a partnership. I mean often in government you will see CEO's and their Ministers not agreeing and it's as transparent as night and day and in those circumstances, the people who are making decisions about providing more resources are naturally suspicious ... good relationships are often rewarded /*

The lack of clarity of the relationship between the CEO and the Minister in the WASPS was apparent. This included meaningful performance agreements and clear accountability.

*/ in many agencies, most agencies in WA I'd say, this starts at the very top because there's not a clear relationship between the Minister and the CEO. You don't have truly meaningful performance agreements at that level and that cascades through most agencies / lack of accountability between Minister and Chief Executive startles innovation, startles decision making / Increasingly the Minister's are operating like CEO's so the CEO's are operating more and more cautiously /*

The need for clarity in the accountability for the CEO/Minister relationship was expressed in terms of knowing what the CEO is 'going to be shot for'. It was perceived as vital that the CEO understood what the role of a modern bureaucrat was, in particular in regards to public sector program delivery.

*/ having an ability to influence the Minister, to work closely with Minister, to understand that being a modern bureaucrat is about helping government deliver their programs, it's not about having an arms length very formal relationships to the point where you can't work ... It's not about politicizing, it's just about helping government do their job in a way which maintains your independence in the process and that means striking a relationship with your Minister ... to be innovative you need to know what scope you have, what is your authority, what's your authority to take decisions, what accountability are you going to have. Those things are not clear in the public service and it goes to the formal relationship that exists between a Minister and a Chief Executive. You can have your working relationship but there then needs to be great clarity and certainty about what's the CEO going to be shot for /*

Experts and Influencers saw the importance of the relationship between CEO and Minister as being 'critical' to achieve innovation. Also perceived as being important was a sense of trust.

*/ the nature of the relationship with CEO ... and the Minister, is absolutely crucial. You've got to be working with them on a daily basis and on the phone, meeting, driving it so that each inside each other's head and knowing, having an understanding and a confidence that that's what's really wanted / My experience is you can have Ministers who are quite cautious with quite innovative CEO's and the other way around. The important thing is the sense of trust that they build between them. If that's not there then it makes any innovation I think difficult. But whichever way it's been pushed and pulled, if the trust is there then it'll happen in a way that's smoother /*

Driving the agenda of innovation was seen as an important aspect of both the CEO and Minister role. The personal and professional relationship between both influenced this drive for innovation.

*/ from a CEO's perspective, the CEO might have their own agenda that they want to push and if they can capture the Minister into running that agenda that is quite often what happens. More often than not you've got a CEO who is in maintenance mode ... most of them aren't very good innovators / occasionally you get a Minister who's got a very progressive agenda or very forward agenda and the Minister needs to take the CEO with them to make sure it's implemented so you've got that relationship between the two at a personal and professional level is very important / Your better performing Minister's and CEO's have got egos and the hardest thing in the public sector is to actually get something done.*

Experts and Influencers perceived that at times it was the Minister who drove innovation and at times it was the CEO. Ideally however, when both were drivers it was perceived as being a very creative relationship in terms of innovation.

*/ My perception is that most Ministers don't have a big picture agenda of what it is that they want to achieve and to that extent they become something of a captive of the CEO or the department. There are others who at least in a broad sense understand what it is they want to use their 4 years in government doing and they push to get that done to varying degrees / You might have 10 - 20% of your Ministers as innovative agents of change and who are then going to drive those changes. When you can get a combination of a CEO who is a driver and a Minister who is a driver providing you both pointed in the same direction that can be a very creative relationship / Yes I think it's important that Minister's realize the depth of knowledge that's to be found in a department. I think there's certainly a risk both at Commonwealth and State level that a lot of the innovation comes out of party political structures ... the Minister's office rather than out of the department /*

The role of the Department and the CEO in creating a policy direction for innovation was perceived as important for innovation especially with the changing nature of the CEO being the main policy advisor to Ministers. There was a perception that a change had occurred which may indicate that Political Advisors may now take on a more active role. Of concern was the situation described where the CEO might have a tendency to become dictatorial and try and 'bludgeon' the Minister.

*/ in the past when we had a situation where the heads of agencies were the main Policy Advisors to Ministers. It's a two-edged sword. It was seen that if there was going to be development of really new and different and innovative public policy, it needed to come out of the policy sections of departments. Now the two-edged part of it was sometimes department heads have a tendency to be a bit dictatorial about that and perhaps try and bludgeon their Minister's ... With the move now to much more openness and transparency and also any Minister or any government having such a wide range of input into public policy, the Minister adviser's, the lobby groups etc, it's placed the department's role in coming up with sort of innovative public policy in a slightly different light ... they can be a power house for innovation in terms of public policy / I think you had to believe that when the ... government came to power everything changed. They introduced advisors and all that simply because they'd been out of power for a long time and they found in previous governments that the public sector wasn't responding to them. I think both governments now have taken their model so a lot of the policy planning is happening at the political level and the advisor level and the CEO's are very much towing the line ... The CEO's are always on the line if they step away from the government's agenda/*

Specifically a lack of trust of the CEO and Departments by the Minister was perceived by Experts and Influencers as being a significant problem in regards to innovation in the WASPS. Of concern was the increasing tendency of politicians to distrust the public sector and it was perceived by participants that with a change of Government this problem was only made worse.

*/ That greatly depends on, my big thing in terms of whether or not you can be effective or not with the Minister is there's got to be a trusting relationship. If you don't have the trust of the Minister, you may as well go home and that's very hard to build. So as a general trend again, I'd observe that for both sides of politics it is taking longer to establish. Usually each time there's a change of Government even when there's a change of Minister, it seems to me to take longer these days to get the trust of the Minister because they've got this suspicion ... Minister's and politicians generally maybe seem to distrust the public sector more than they used to /*



The ability of the CEO to give 'frank and fearless' advice to Ministers has been discussed under the theme of political interference. However, within the theme of the relationship between CEO and Ministers it is also an issue. The effect of 'distrust' in reference to 'frank and fearless' advice was perceived as a significant barrier to innovation.

*/ Now the slight hitch with all this is that coming back to the politics, most of the time government's don't want to know the answers to those sorts of questions, they don't want to know if they've failed, they probably do want to know if they've succeeded and then you get into the frank and fearless stuff, you know Minister, I regret to tell you that that's been a total disaster, that policy of yours hasn't worked, had the opposite effect in fact ... you've got to be pretty tough as a bureaucrat to come to the Minister with that kind of advice because he'll say that's good ... make sure that report gets shredded by close of business today ... yeh and by the way ... go and find another job /*

### **General Culture of WASPS**

Experts and Influencers expressed a very strong perception that the general culture of the WASPS affected innovation. The findings were consistent with phase one findings indicating that there needed to be some significant changes to the culture. There was a perception that there had been significant change to the culture and that it was still in a period of transition.

*/ I think public sector culture's in Western Australia's one of those that has changed so much in the past probably 20 years that it's sort of still a bit in transition probably / I just think there's huge diversity [of culture] across departments and jurisdictions / You're trying to change culture. Its an ongoing process. You'll get the structure and the processes in but you've got to get the walk and talk, the education, the speak, to really get it flying. You don't change culture overnight /*

Some Experts and Influencers saw the culture as being restrictive, making comparisons to other governments.

*/ it's the culture. The culture, the political climate ... puts some restrictions on people. If you have different governments like the Queensland government, we don't care if you make a few boo boo's but we want a lot of innovation and then I think you'd see a lot of these people at least be more innovative and creative in where they are going // the real issue is what flexibility do you provide the staff with to release your innovation and how much encouragement do you give them /*

Participants identified the need to create a culture where people felt motivated and where they were mentored to develop a collaborative culture supporting of innovation.

*/ We really have to start encouraging people to mentor and to develop and then rather than people in there who have got an attitude that they want to suppress rivals but rather develop that, a much more collaborative culture / going back to the bureaucrats they're not motivated /*

Experts and Influencers were articulate about an ideal culture for the WASPS that could enhance innovation. This included descriptions of a culture where public servants felt free to express their opinions, and where they had clear priorities and accountabilities.

*/ The good organisations not only have a culture where people are encouraged to ask questions, they've got processes in place whereby priorities are identified, resources are allocated, people are held to account, people have got freedom to express their thoughts and challenge other people / Put in place a significant cultural framework where people are simulated /*

It was perceived as important that public servants be allowed to take more risks in a climate where they were rewarded for trying and where morale was strong.

*/ Well you have to allow people to take more risks. You actually have to create a climate where people are rewarded for trying rather than succeeding and punishes them for failing not that I, I mean there isn't a punitive climate here, I'm not saying that but you would want to move it in that direction in any event / I think morale within the organization is an important part of it as well. I think an organization that does not have strong morale is not an organization that is open to change /*

The need to recruit leaders within the WASPS who are capable of establishing a culture encouraging of innovation was seen as vital by Experts and Influencers.

*/ having leaders that are capable of creating an environment where people feel that they can participate, are free to participate and a culture where new ideas and involvement and engagement is really encouraged ... a whole range of factors ... personality, power plays ... prevents it really from being an inclusive, outgoing expense of culture and that's a real problem in some agencies / But if you can get people like ... in and as the Minister if you're constantly driving change then people will see that ultimately as a good thing whereas in the absence of that I think they see a safer bet as being conservative / only an individual can alter culture ... The structure can't alter culture, the individuals because no matter what structure you have in place, if the individuals are the right people they can actually break down all the barriers in the world and make it [innovation] happen /*

## **Risk**

Experts and Influencers perceived that the risk averse nature of the WASPS seriously impacted on innovation. They believed there was little leeway in authority to take risks and that the consequences of a mistake were significant. Participants felt that making mistakes while trying to innovate could mean that public servants 'get belted' or 'shat upon' and that the culture was more about survival than risk taking.

*/ people probably don't turn their mind to innovation because they're not given authority ... in most cases they don't have leaders who are talking about innovation, they're talking about survival, they're talking about accountability ... they don't feel they've got any leeway like one bad decision and you're dead ... one bad decision no matter how many good ones you make is serious stuff and there's no tolerance ... from the political leaders ... no tolerance in the community because the media just beat it up ... why would you do it because if you make a mistake you're going to get belted / when somebody in the public service does dare to chance and that word dare implies an element of risk taking ... going out on a limb ... an idea that is different .... taking a personal chance and a chance of being laughed at and criticised. ... shat upon at a great height and that is what is being destroyed / We do not have people who are prepared to be lateral thinkers and dare to take a chance, dare to be different and therefore there is no incentive to be different. It is a pack of lambs, 'baaa', all following their leader, you don't rock the boat, you don't move out of very strict guidelines /*

Participants confirmed the significant culture of risk aversity within the WASPS and that leadership of this risk aversity started with the Premier and the Government in power. It was perceived that the Government needed a situation where 'there can be no problems' within the sector and that this contributed to minimal innovation.

*/ And of course there's an incredible risk averse atmosphere in the whole bureaucracy. That doesn't say that there aren't some beautiful examples of innovation going on but you asked me for the general climate and that is what the general climate is / the last thing on earth you need is for anybody to say there's a problem here, it doesn't matter what it is, there can be no problems and so that naturally leads to risk aversion and naturally leads to zero innovation / is very risk adverse, it's almost survival mode every 3 or 4 years depending which government ... there's more restraints on the public sector to be innovative and creative /*

Interestingly, Experts and Influencers perceived a lack of understanding of the risks of actually taking no risks.

*/ but you know that's not to say there aren't risks associated with taking no risks and that's a culture that needs to be understood also /*

Participants also recognised however that the capacity to take risks varied across the WASPS and that some organisations had CEOs very committed to make innovative things happen. It was perceived that in some organisations there was a history that did not allow the CEO to see the possibilities of innovation.

*/ about risk averse ... You'll find ... it varies. I think some of the organisations ... are actually innovative and the CEO or the top dog is very committed and you'll see things happening and you see they look for things. Others, they'll have the things that they just don't put their money where their mouth is so the values in action are not them ... I think they've got a lot of luggage from the past that they've just sort of taken along and they don't see that innovation can be about which it is, about decision making, problem solving, teamwork /*

In regards to risk aversity, the qualities of the CEO were also referred to as affecting the state of innovation within organisations. These qualities were perceived to include a lack of confidence and a dislike for 'insurgency' as opposed to innovative leaders who were very confident to proceed with innovative ideas.

*/ Innovation, like creativity, is a process of discovery. You don't know what's at the other end. Now if you are risk averse, if you lack confidence and you don't like insurgency, you will never go down that path because you want to be too sure all the time to make a decision and I think that's part of the problem so with the leaders who are very grounded, very sure of themselves and are quite happy to make some mistakes will take you down that path /*

The role that education and information played in risk aversity was perceived as important by Experts and Influencers. This included education and information sharing with the public and politicians to ensure a sound understanding of the risks involved in innovation as well as the benefits.

*/ I believe that the basis of all of these problems [risk aversity] is education / so if the public and the politicians and everybody else, the bureaucracy is fully informed and fully educated which are two different things, then presumably you generate a lot more innovation because people are prepared to understand what the risk is and go for it /*

### **Recognition Of Innovation**

Recognition of innovation within the WASPS was thought to be important by Experts and Influencers. Participants firstly thought that it was crucial to reward 'different' things than those already rewarded within the WASPS.

*/ we've got to start rewarding different sorts of things /*

More importantly, many participants perceived that it was not necessary for recognition to be in a monetary form. Rather it was perceived that recognition was about 'creating an environment' and the 'warm and fuzzy stuff'.

*/ I think it's important because people do like recognition and what you're then doing is creating an environment for innovation and it will flow ... but financial reward I don't think so / I think if you've got a commitment to the public service or to whatever you do then financial reward should not be something which motivates you. I think it's the wrong sort of incentive and it gives rise then to strange outcomes / People who are self-motivated, their reward comes from recognition and their own self-worth which is not about getting an extra \$500 or a trip overseas or something/ the warm and fuzzy stuff /*

Further, incentives such as promotion of innovative WASPS employees was perceived to be of more value than monetary recognition.

*/ my experience is those people in your workforce who are innovative, who are lateral thinkers within their authorities and within the mission and vision of your organization are normally the people who do well anyway, they get promoted. The great reward, what is the greatest reward anyone can get...get promoted so I think those structures are in place and there's nothing that needs to be done to that /*

## ***Culture of Constraint***

Experts and Influencers talked broadly about a culture of constraint within the WASPS which had incrementally increased as a result of events such as WA Inc Royal Commission. As a result, 'compliance' had become a major consideration for leaders.

*/ we've gone through an era ... a decade or more of increasing constraints placed upon public sector employees ... It's the response to the WA Inc Royal Commission and the subsequent steps that have been taken both in the statutory framework and policy framework ... has made life more difficult for people to be as innovative as they might've been previously because compliance has become the first and major issue for most senior people because if they're not seen to be complying in fact their jobs are in danger. That I guess is it in a nutshell, that there's some very innovative people perhaps facing constraints and I understand the reasons for the constraints /*

Interestingly, participants, while recognising the necessity of the increased compliance, questioned if the 'pendulum had swung too far' towards compliance instead of achieving good innovative outcomes.

*/ I think the frustration lies ... in the constraints that we now have as the accountability framework. Having said that I think that they are necessary, I just question whether we've perhaps swung the pendulum too far and whether it would swing back again because ... I could see ... some of the creativity and innovation occurred during the 1980's and some of that was very positive ... now we've got a very difficult environment at which to do anything beyond complying and I think if you talked to CEO's around the place, they might express it in different words but the common theme that would come through is we're all about compliance and not necessarily outcomes /*

## ***Public Pressure***

It was perceived that public pressure had a considerable effect on innovation within the WASPS. Firstly there was a perception that interest groups influenced decision making and that leaders needed to ensure that the interests of the broader constituency were considered. There was a perceived need for leaders not to allow interest groups to dominate when it came to influencing innovation.

*/ public pressure is important from that timing perspective. Public pressure comes in many forms and sometimes it is there expressed by interest groups and often you need to appeal over the head of those interest groups back to the broader constituency / Well the noisy groups / power is really ... you need to weigh all of that up in looking at what you do and how you do it and hopefully get to a stage that you can work with people on things that are important and put to one side those things that aren't ... there's a difference between public pressure and pressure from individual interest groups as to how you deal with things /*

The influence of the media was also recognised as effecting innovation especially in applying pressure to the WASPS and also in inaccurate portrayal of the issues. It was perceived by Experts and Influencers that Leaders needed to find ways of dealing with the influence that the media and interest groups had on the public service.

*/ with the [media] you'd read that article and you'd think 'oh, isn't that shocking ... If you read the article closely ... it's completely opposite to what the headlines say ... applies an awful lot of pressure and interest groups apply an awful lot of pressure but somehow or other you just need to be able to be responding to that sort of pressure and you also need to be finding different ways to do things in order to relieve that pressure /*



The above perceptions are summarised in the following quote where it was recognised that Leaders needed to overcome the culture of the Government and WASPS and find ways to enhance innovation through meaningful consultation with the public and a more accurate portrayal of the issues by the media and Government.

*/ [re public pressure] I think the extraordinary incapacity of people to tolerate anything not working well immediately is a sort of a problem and the hypocriticalness of media and the public and the fact that any mungbean that might have a complaint about anything, no matter how unreasonable, can get airplay does create a certain culture within governments and within the public service about it. One of the difficulties is trying to sort of get a customer focused organization where they really do listen to what people are saying meaningfully and actually listen /*

### **Summary of Cultural Issues**

Many of the themes in the cultural category perceived by Experts and Influencers as influencing innovation were consistent with those perceived by Leaders. It did appear however, that Experts and Influencers were far more critical than Leaders in their perceptions. The human resource issues affecting innovation in the WASPS will now be discussed.

## Human Resource Issues

### *Ability of Ministers*

Participants discussed the role and abilities of Ministers in influencing innovation in the WASPS extensively. Many were critical about Minister's ability and commitment to innovation and their support of the WASPS.

*/ their track record has not always been strong ... there's a caution / needs a strong reform program with a strong Minister leading it / they had a couple of Ministers ... one who was a thinker outside the square and who was prepared to give support to members of the bureaucracy ... innovative in their thinking because that's what the government wanted to do, actually wanted to change things/*

Participants felt that, as with CEO's, there was a wide range of skills and talents amongst Ministers.

*/ the leadership of the public service bureaucrats is exactly the case with the political leadership. You'd find on one hand ... really capable, competent, bright, innovative, smart Ministers. I mean to put ... in charge of ... was just a crime /*

Experts and Influencers were particularly critical of the situation where Ministers assumed responsibility for areas they actually knew nothing about. Equally participants were scathing about the ability of some Ministers and used derogatory statements to describe their perceived poor ability.

*/ become a Minister in an area that he knew nothing about / they also get to choose who the Head of department is and so you've got an individual who knows nothing about whatever ... he knew nothing about ... and he had to make a decision about ... who knew nothing / I mean that was in my view criminal ... didn't have any chance of grasping the issues ... So what hope have you got to get leadership any really good bright idea ... he probably couldn't spell the word if you started talking innovation to a Minister like that he would say give me a go, how many votes ... just give them a thump and a kick up the ass and all that kind of mentality you've got no chance of getting innovative policy being adopted ... pretty mediocre so what does the Chief Executive do in that circumstance? ... He was not a super bright guy but he was pretty open and innovative in a sense that he was open to new ideas and new ways of doing things / zero rating on personality and ethics, zero on intelligence and a capacity to understand complex issues, what do you do as the Chief Executive of an agency with a Minister like that? You've got buckleys chance of doing anything innovative.*

Experts and Influencers perceived that an effective Minister was one with an open mind who is prepared to support their agency's innovative efforts with personal drive.

*/ ... has got a very open mind ... prepared to take on new ideas and ... in the category of Minister who does want to be innovative/ actually something they want them to explore and try and achieve on the knowledge that if something does not work exactly as they planned, the Minister's going to stand behind them and support them / An agency that has a support of Minister / also having an agenda and the personal drive to do it /*

In particular, the risk taking ability and ethos of the Minister was perceived as important and whether or not they were willing to stand up for innovation. Reassuringly, although participants recognised that being innovative could be difficult from a political point of view, that there was no point in a Minister 'just occupying the seat'.

*/ if you're not prepared to put your head up above the parapet, you're not going to make any change / by being one of those risk takers, you do consume a lot of political capital ... not here just to occupy the seat. There is absolutely no point /*

In addition to their perceptions about the role of Advisors influencing the relationship between CEO and Minister as previously discussed, Experts and Influencers also commented on the role of Advisors and Chief of Staff in the performance of Ministers.

*/ those who advise ... don't often support [the Minister's ] imagination and enthusiasm/ when I wasn't getting a cooperative response and ... made sure by having ... Chief of Staff ring the relevant Minister's Chief of Staff that we got answers / sometimes where it fails is it actually steps outside the Minister ... and goes to Chief of Staff who for one reason or another decide they're not going to pass on the information/ I don't believe the advisors have a lot of skills /*

Experts and Influencers had a particular view about the role of an Advisor and felt that the qualities of a good ministerial advisor were to be a broker and an advocate. Specifically they felt that their role in the achievement of innovation was to extract the best out of Department to achieve innovation.

*/ I think that a good Ministerial Officer will be able to be effectively a go-between between the CEO and the Minister and to the extent that they're in the head of the Minister and understands exactly what the Minister wants particularly if [the Minister is] running a busy agenda then they can attend to the detail of things and they might be able to push up suggestions of how to do things / understand the principles, ... then go and liaise ... and be able to smooth the way particularly if you've got a busy Minister / we'd sit down, we'd have a quick discussion about it, right, that's agreed, ... go off and then make sure it happened. So I think the two biggest roles of Ministerial Officers is to drive the Ministers agenda and to extract the best out of Department to achieve that particular agenda. But also to be philosophically sufficiently on the ball to be able to be creative in pushing up ideas /*

The difficulty of being a 'busy' Minister was discussed by Experts and Influencers in terms of their ability to lead innovation. It was perceived that it was better to achieve good quality innovation rather than try and do 'too much'.

*/ managing a portfolio which has got a lot on and from a government point of view there's a case I think that they'd like to see some of that done really well rather than a lot done really averagely ... trying to do too much and you're not actually doing much very well and the community is seeing that because there's either debate or conjecture or issue or frankly just performance isn't there and as a consequence they lose the patience of the population.*

When things do not go to plan and innovative ideas go astray, participants felt that Ministers sought to blame someone. Participants felt that it was more desirable for Ministers to be accountable for their leadership in the area of innovation.

*/ the Minister will seek a scapegoat / the bureaucracy ... was blamed for things which didn't work and as a consequence of that the bureaucracy got protective. There was an era also where the first thing you did when something went wrong was you sacked somebody and that [didn't give ] rise to confidence/ just standing up there and saying yes I got this wrong / don't blame my Chief Executive, it was my accountability, it wasn't his or hers /*

In terms of the ability of Ministers, there was a perception that Cabinet did little to promote innovation and that its processes get 'clogged with minutia' and dealt with issues that really belonged at CEO level. This lack of attention to strategy influenced innovation in a negative way. Participants also recognised that politically strong Ministers significantly dictated the capacity and direction of innovation.

*/ everything gets forced up to the Cabinet, Cabinet process gets clogged with minutia which they do every Monday, they're probably sitting up there today, this morning, dealing with issues which should not be on a Cabinet table / that's not a decision for the Cabinet, that's a decision for you Minister or frankly it's a decision for your Chief Executive and just go and deal with it / a very strong Minister in any government takes a fair amount of stopping. Minister's who are strong either in their performance or in their position in the party can dictate a fair amount of regard and therefore have a greater capacity getting outcomes in their favor than others. By that I mean someone who holds the votes.... / ... doesn't have the political power like ... or ... does / have got real power /*

The ability of Ministers to avoid 'over managing' their Departments was perceived to affect innovation. In particular, participants were concerned that by Ministers focusing on the detail of the Department they became more like CEOs.

*/ It becomes really a cultural thing which is hard to quantify of somehow or other placing the premium on performance and delivery / I know how I do it. ... and that is by driving people hard / The new more sophisticated Ministers in both major parties [ran] their departments with much more interest in the detail ... than in the past and they've become more and more like heads of departments and the heads of departments have become more and more like sort of Chief of Staff and there is less and less room to move I think /*

Of great concern was the perception that some CEOs actively undermined their Ministers and bide their time knowing that they will 'go away'. There was a perception that Ministers were 'banging their head against a brick wall' with little influence on their Department or the Heads.

*/ that Ministers come and go ... if you don't like the direction of the Minister you sort of work with it and undermine and whatever and bide your time and they'll go away / banging ... head against a brick wall because ... had been unable to get ... department to do something that ... wanted them to do because they had made their own mind up where they wanted to go and ... was having no influence over it at all ... it just shows you that really the wrong people are employed within those roles / clearly they don't respect [the Minister] and clearly they don't believe that / In the end ... decided to stop talking to the department and did his own thing so ... was driven for a long time out of the Minister's office so his Chief of Staff and other people within the Minister's office actually made these decisions / can't even influence the sector so the sector's actually in a bit of trouble, whichever way you look at it the sector's in a fair bit of trouble ... got no respect as a Minister and ... department reflects that. ... struggles to influence ... department as to what direction to go / Well [the Minister] and the [CEO] actually have no link at all. ... says one thing, ... says the other / just off ... doing his own thing /*

Participants perceived that there was a lack of leadership at Political level and few 'champions' of the public sector and so support for innovation was minimal. Additionally participants felt that the CEO had a role to 'sell a concept' to their Ministers in order that they championed innovative ideas.

*/ one of the great criticisms I have with the public service in Western Australia is there's no champion of the public service at Ministerial level / It's almost become culture of the whole public service because there's no leader at the political level / If you haven't got that support, I'm now talking about both small p and big P Political support, ... you may have a fantastic idea but it doesn't go anywhere so you've got to have the capacity to effectively sell a concept to your own leaders, to the Minister so that they can become your champion in term of the resource allocation process and that way at the end of the day you get that money to put through your ideas /*

The ability of Ministers as change agents in achieving successful innovation was perceived as important as well as the difficulties of achieving this within a political cycle.

*/ there's no doubt it's a problem and from my experience from a ship of state, a very, a difficult vessel to redirect and it takes absolutely all of your energy to get it [innovation] to happen and certainly in 4 years, in my view you can't do the sorts, I haven't been able to complete the change agenda that I want and have it in a sort of consolidated healthy form that I believe gives it significant robustness and rigour to last so that chopping and changing at Ministerial level does affect / so to me the whole point in doing something is to actually be making progress, that's the whole reason why I want to be here is to make progress. Not just change for change sake but to be in there, to have identified what we need to do differently and to actually start doing it / [as a Minister] you are basically a change agent /*

### **Ability of CEO**

In discussions about innovation in the WASPS, participants perceived that the Chief Executive (CEO) of the Government Department or Agency has a significant effect on and ability to influence innovation. In this study participants used the term CEO also to refer to the positions designated as Executive Director, and used the terms interchangeably. Firstly participants talked about the ability of the CEOs within the WASPS.

*/ with a Chief Executive who shows every sign of knowing what he's doing which is probably the first time we've had one for 12 years / I was struck by the quality of the CEO's of ... who really seemed very switched on, very capable / Some are good ... done good work there ... Others are a bit more guarded, much more conservative / if they're good enough to be appointed a senior position they should have a degree of flexibility /*

There were specific references to the CEO's ability to innovate and provide leadership for innovation. Participants felt that when the CEO's had a clear agenda and interest in innovation that they provided encouragement for others to be innovative.



*/ It [the ability to innovate] has to do with their talents, it's to do with their interpersonal capacities, that's absolutely clear and I think people who can work with others who are prepared to trust, work openly, take risks but be honest about what they're doing / with having a very clear mandate then you've got to have Chief Executive's who are interested in being innovative as well and then encouraging staff to be innovative / The answer is yes the CEO must do it [lead innovation] / I think you need to make sure when appointing heads of departments, senior Managers or even Ministers that that's where the innovation needs to come from /*

Experts and Influencers were somewhat critical that CEO's could speak much rhetoric about innovation but actually do little to encourage or pursue it.

*/ because what you find in the public sector is those people who use a lot of management speak who warmly embrace concepts but never do anything and then you've got the jaded ones who most probably are in the majority or the cautious ones, then occasionally you find a real gem of someone who really is innovative in the way they approach issues / whether you have that drive to do things which as I said is the biggest, single difficulty that you've got in the public sector /*

Of concern were perceptions that when Ministers needed cooperation from CEOs in the WASPS to lead innovation and they encountered resistance, that the reactions of Ministers was to by-pass certain CEOs and Executive Directors and find someone within the Department who was more interested and able.

*/ Certainly in the more senior positions you do that. I had a fellow who I worked reasonably closely with ... before I realized he wasn't particularly interested in delivering on the sorts of things that I wanted to so I just got someone else to do that work for me from thereon in, someone in the department ... Well as a Minister I wasn't going to allow him to stifle or frustrate whatever it is I wanted to achieve so I just didn't refer matters to that particular public servant anymore, I just found other people who could do the work for me / You find people who can deliver for you and you get out there and you use them ... You don't just accept oh, so we can't do it, you say well give me someone who can / By just wanting them to deliver and expecting from them certain standards and if they don't well they know that they'll just be bypassed and shunted off /*

Specifically in reference to the qualities of the CEOs within the WASPS, they were perceived by Experts and Influencers as being mediocre. There was also a frustration expressed regarding poor leadership in the public sector by Managers in regards to innovation. .

*/ You could probably pick out two or three ... they're pretty exceptional and the rest are a pretty mediocre lot ... There are a lot of talented people in the SES and all of the talented people I know in the SES, I know probably half of them are very frustrated people at the moment. They are severely frustrated and that's really bad and many of them are either walking or actively being displaced by inadequate leadership [at CEO level] and that's a huge indictment on our public sector /*

Interestingly, the recruitment and selection of CEOs was mentioned by participants, with the belief that there was a need to choose CEOs who were more capable in encouraging collaboration and interactions that lead to innovation.

*/ You've obviously got to get strong leaders who are capable of inspiring that where it doesn't already exist and that's one of the things that we really need to be focusing on when we choose CEO's is their capacity to put in place flatter structures that are going to encourage collaboration / good people for a start, decent people ... Capable of interacting in an adult civil way with each other, having the capacity to relate with the rest of the team, not seeing the rest of the team as competition necessarily but even if they did dealing with them civilly and sensible but yes it would need innovation but in picking the team, what strikes me is we've got the wrong people making the selections /*

### ***Promotion Opportunities***

The process of promotion within the WASPS was perceived by Experts and Influencers as lacking transparency and fairness and an impediment to innovation.

*/ Although people espouse the fact that there is a process for promoting people, there's no process for rewarding people but there is a process for promoting people but those rules are so obscure when you go into them that really there are no rules and it's really up to a committee somewhere. There's no transparency in the process so basically you're losing incredibly good people all the time /*

## **Gender**

Experts and Influencers perceived that innovation in the WASPS was affected by not having enough women in SES positions to bring a different perspective into the leadership of the public sector and subsequent innovation strategies. They also outlined the unwillingness of CEOs to look at the reasons why women were not applying for senior positions, suggesting that it was 'too hard' to address the barriers for women.

*/ So the women are not stepping up, they have to be tapped on the shoulder ... the explanation for why there is few women in leadership is that they don't apply ... the question is why aren't they applying? What is it about the culture or the structural elements or whatever that are causing them not to apply because you can't argue that they're any less capable or intelligent or qualified / there has to be some women on my Executive team' and everybody said 'there aren't any' and its rubbish and he went and found them and just did it, so I'm a bit cynical about the fact that some of the senior men say 'where are the women' / some of them are prepared to say 'well I've now noticed there are none [women applying for leadership positions] but its too hard' and they hit these barriers and say no-one applies and then say 'well I tried, no-one applied' as opposed to doing the more detailed stuff /*

## **Performance Management of SES**

Participants perceived that there was a lack of effective performance management of leaders within the WASPS and that this had an effect on the leadership of innovation.

*/ Well if I talked to the CEO's most of them will tell me that they don't get performance managed really. Hopefully it doesn't happen when they try and establish it with their Minister's and the Minister can say well you'll know when I'm unhappy / I think just generally if you're a career public servant then there is an element of not wanting to shine which sounds bizarre but it's there and that way you don't get labeled or picked off / Well it's pretty hard to sack a public servant unless they're horrendously wrong! /*

### ***Movement and Attrition***

While phase one participants perceive the attrition of Leaders from the WASPS as a negative thing for innovation, Experts and Influencers saw this as advantageous, especially if they returned to the WASPS with additional skills and knowledge gained from the private sector and overseas.

*/ I didn't think the fact that the public service is losing people to the private sector or overseas is a bad thing at all. If some fraction, if a good fraction of those people are ultimately coming back then the public service is only going to gain from that / through trying to encourage mobility and trying to change the culture from above /*

The need for a more porous public sector was identified to ensure public servants gained experience from 'non-Government and Business' organisations. Also the movement between WASPS departments to ensure that the traditional 'silo' mentality of government is broken down was perceived as enabling innovation.

*/ the public service is doing well given its current structure but ... it could be more innovative if it was a more porous public service, if there was greater movement from non-government organizations and business and into and out of the government for people to have a little bit of experience in other contexts. What we don't talk about as much which is equally important I think is the movement between the departments so breaking down the traditional silo mentality of government by encouraging public servants in the course of their career to move between agencies./*

Experts and Influencers did identify that public servants moved out of the WASPS for a number of reasons and that of crucial importance to innovation was the retention of corporate knowledge for the sector.

*/ I think we're in danger of losing those people for two reasons; one the market out there at the moment is ripe and people are being attracted out of the public sector / There is something that's lost by mobility, that sort of deep corporate knowledge but I think that can be found again in the sense by movements in and out. So it's very important that somebody in the department has the corporate knowledge to tell a Minister that tried something that failed 15 years ago that the department has tried and failed on precisely that but that doesn't mean that the person with that corporate knowledge couldn't have spent 5 of the intervening years working in a different department /*

Specifically in reference to SES movement, Experts and Influencers saw this as advantageous for innovation, enabling Leaders to value diversity and ideas from elsewhere.

*/ have a notion ... of a senior Executive service ... kind of flexible, mobile workforce, that can sort of turn itself to any task or any department. ... a stint in various agencies, it's bloody hard work and it rarely happens ... it would be interesting to see how many members of the SES have in fact worked in a variety of departments but I suspect it would be very few, most would've grown up and be sort of ... typically born and bred in one agency and that might be true of some of the Chief Executive's too. ... it's given me the capacity to be innovative ... a different view of the world ... doing it some other way ... diversity and experience is very useful to drive innovation because you've just got a) you're open to other experience and b) you've seen how things can be done differently /*

## **Recruitment into WASPS**

There were many comments by participants about the type of people recruited into the WASPS and the effect of this on innovation. This included reference to the recruitment of people described as 'dull' and 'un-innovative'. It was suggested that many of these people who occupy SES positions, were bypassed when innovative ideas needed to be explored as they were not capable of delivering on innovation.

*/ I don't think we go out of our way to employ un-innovative staff or dull and boring staff / that is not likely to be the kind of personality attracted to the staid public service / Well you get a drone if I can collectively describe those people but you bypass them / They tend to be in the lower positions [in the SES] and you've got to manage people like that and if they're not capable of delivering you bypass them / they're so narrow in their thinking and so narrow in their interpretation and in fact they're not very commercially minded at all. They actually don't live in the real world /*

It was perceived as crucial to get the right people in the right role within the WASPS if innovation was to be successful. This included the need to attract 'innovative people' into the WASPS and not the 'typical' public sector employee.

*/ and it was just never going to succeed ... no matter even if I gave the blueprint and told them how to do it, they couldn't do it because it's the wrong people. You get the right people in any organization, even if the blueprint is bad or will fail, it'll work. Whatever project we tackle, if we've got the right people in the right spot then it'll actually succeed and there's the fundamental difference between a private sector like ours and a public sector like government / if you have the right people on the spot and their commitment is there, they'll make it work anywhere / So if you've got the right people in the right spots ... They can overcome all the barriers / But if my hands weren't tied and I could go and select my own people and I could pick ... not just the sort of guys who normally work in the public sector ... get some innovative people who manage and administer organizations, look at key people who could drive and then develop it from the top down/*

The inability of line agencies to directly employ Leaders and Managers in their Departments was seen as an impediment to innovation. This was because employment of these people was subject to 'Premier and Cabinet requirements' and that a CEO had little authority to negotiate the employment and salary arrangements of leaders.

*/ I think Line Agencies are unduly constrained in how they employ their senior staff ... an absurdity in this current day and age. I would have the accountability existing between the Minister and the Chief Executive about how they managed their budget and how they managed their staff resources and then that Chief Executive each year gets assessed as to what they've done so for instance if during the course of the year the Chief Executive decides to increase the level of their senior executives abnormally they would be asked to account for that but this idea that you can't do anything until you get the approval of some external agency which doesn't really understand your business is irritating /*

### **SES Recruitment For Innovation**

Experts and Influencers perceived strongly that the recruitment of SES was critical in terms of innovation. The overall perception was that the WASPS needed to be more effective at recruiting people capable of leading innovation. Firstly the job descriptions and selection criteria of SES members were perceived to be limiting in that there was no clear statement in relation to the capabilities of an applicant to lead innovation. Participants pointed out that many of the job descriptions made no mention to innovation and that criteria had not been changed for many years to reflect the different requirements of leaders within the WASPS.

*/ It [SES selection criteria] doesn't mention innovation at all. It's buried ... there are scriptures there about advocacy, network, all those sorts of things ... innovation doesn't get a mention / go back to all those JDFs for all positions in the public sector and they found it in the ark and haven't changed it all that much since. So if somebody was to write a modern JDF for a senior position you'd actually talk about innovation / the first bad decision often made is selecting the leader in the first place ... the wrong criteria/*

The emphasis placed on innovation capabilities within the recruitment criteria for leaders within the WASPS was discussed and Experts and Influencers felt that while it would be integrated into the job descriptions, it wouldn't be foremost in the selection criteria.

*/ If I stood up and said looking for CEO's, innovation is top of the list, people would be most surprised. And maybe so they should be. Why would one thing be top of the list as opposed to another? But I think it's probably not uppermost in people's minds and it's talked about often with a sense of frustration. And that it can be too hard, too difficult and not well rewarded, not well recognized and risky / I probably wouldn't put that [innovation criteria] at the top of my selection criteria I must say /*

The isolation of Western Australia was discussed in terms of the attraction of innovative leaders to this state. Participants believed that the WASPS needed to 'work harder' at attracting and retaining good quality SES.

*/The problem that Western Australia faces both in the public sector and in the labor market generally is that it's an isolated market. So what is it that gets people to want to come to Western Australia? It's certainly not the geography unless you're looking for isolation and it's hard to compete with the Eastern seaboard so when you're looking at having an innovative, creative public sector, then we've probably got to work harder and be more innovative in a sense to attract and then to retain /*



As in phase one, participants discussed the dilemma between recruitment of management experts as opposed to specialist experts to the positions of the SES. It was perceived that the notion of 'generic management' where a leader of an organisation was a leadership / management expert with little or no knowledge of the area that he/she was leading, had a high cost attached to it in terms of innovation. There was a perception that it would be possible for a specialist to provide effective leadership with the necessary support put in place.

*/ the notion of generic managements and so forth I think had a high cost attached to it. And obviously you want specialists and so forth who are capable of delivering leadership ... But better to have specialists and Experts in those areas and support them properly than the other way around /*

There were varied perceptions about finding innovative recruitment practices to secure high quality candidates for SES positions. These included using a standard process, to tapping someone on the shoulder to executing an executive search.

*/ It's not easy finding innovative ways to recruit CEO's. ... in fact in some states they don't even have a selection process and in the Commonwealth, they have a tap on the shoulder one, which I'm not saying it's necessarily a bad thing / we use a fairly standard process / I insisted on an executive search ... and insisted that they look outside the box /*

Experts and Influencers also recognised that while it was desirable for all SES members to be able to demonstrate the leadership of innovation, it was also necessary to have different emphasis on different qualities, innovative capabilities being only one, depending on the agency and its present needs.

*/ anything they'd like to take into account in selecting CEO's ... some of them say look we've have this amount of innovation, this amount of upheaval and change, we need a really good steady, not someone sort of uninteresting but someone who has a lot of experience in leading an organization ... we need someone quite innovative, doing some new legislative change, thinking differently / there's a generic set of criteria and innovation will be embedded in there and in testing those criteria, obviously it's a different job with a slightly different emphasis sometimes /*

There was a perception that the SES of the WASPS had people who were there for a variety of reasons including to 'bump up their super' and while looking at retirement. Participants felt that in these instances, the occupants of these positions were a barrier to innovation.

*/it seems to me in the SES there is a group of people who are not quite time serving but ... only wanted the job to bump up their super for the last 2 years of their working life ... that distresses me when I hear that ... I want someone to be passionate about going into a CEO role / within the SES that's a bit of a blockage. And they're not the kind of people I want to see promoted to CEO jobs .... a barrier to innovation .... looking at retirement ... there's a group that aren't there, no there's a whole group like that and if it's creating a bit of a blockage /*

It was recognised that the pool of people within the WASPS who were ready to step up into leadership roles was minimal. Experts and Influencers did, however feel that younger people who would be ready in the future to occupy SES positions would create a 'more juvenile and youthful CEO profile'.

*/ it's not like we've got this group of SES people all of whom look ready to step up and are all competitive for more senior leadership roles ... Having said that, there's a group who will be coming through I think who, they're quite young now ... we'll probably end up with a more juvenile and youthful CEO profile /*

The process of recruitment of SES members received significant scrutiny by participants. In particular it was felt that there was a discrepancy between the process followed in recruitment and the outcome that is the capabilities and qualities of the leaders within the SES of the WASPS. The fact that only the process of the recruitment of leaders was appealable rather than the outcome, received significant criticism, as did the recognition that it is very easy to rig process. Experts and Influencers felt that an appeal process based on the 'merits' of the decision was crucial to ensure the best person was chosen for SES positions.

*/ I think we've done ourselves a great disservice by doing away with, by focusing entirely on process. It's very easy to rig a process, you know perfect process and horrible outcome and that's what we do now. We have perfect process supposedly, supposedly able to be reviewed but never does get reviewed, no-one bothers appealing process anymore because it's a waste of time and so there's no check on the actual reality. ... I have great respect for some of the leadership in the public sector but if you were standing outside ... looking inside and saying what sort of a team have you got right across the agencies of the public sector, you say crikey is that the best that we can do / I'm a very strong believer that even the SES appointments and probably even the Chief Executive appointments ... I think there should still be a review on the merits of the decision or the capacity for someone to appeal because this appealing process is utter nonsense and even at Chief Executive level I think there should be some scope for some kind of review ... make an appeal ... there's just got to be some capacity for some sort of judicial review or something like that / I reckon we're scratching to get 50% of the right people getting the jobs these days just because you don't have that kind of back up process /*

The need for a balanced leadership profile was seen as important, in particular the fact that it wouldn't be necessary for every member of the SES to be an innovator themselves, rather that they could participate in innovation led by other innovators.

*/ it's like in any group of people, people need to play different roles ... yes you do need some innovators. So if I was picking an executive team, I'd like to have two or three people who were really good innovators, but I'd also like to have a few other people who play other roles in getting a balanced set of outcomes and not all of us are all things in particular strengths and weaknesses. So the art in selecting a group ... a fairly balanced bunch of individuals just like any leadership group /*

Political influence in the selection of SES members was perceived as a reality even though the rhetoric of the selection of leaders suggests that this should be out of the political process. There were varying views over the appointment of CEO's within the sector and importantly there was a recognition that government needed to be able to appoint leaders who they felt comfortable with.

*/ it seems to me that they're not necessarily hired for the sake of innovation, they're hired for other reasons, other political reasons / you do need to have Chief Executive's and Minister's ... having some capacity to ... veto even a selection of the Chief Executive's ... my jury is out on whether it's a good idea to have the Premier or Prime Minister having the last say on Chief Executive's in agencies, I'm still not sure on that ... that's just bastardization of the process if ever there was, because no-one was looking at what they should've been looking at, which is what's the best outcome we can get / so having an elaborate process where you've got the Public Sector Standards Commissioner and all that bullshit in place it's totally irrelevant / government able to appoint a bunch of leaders across the sector that it feels comfortable with and there's no good ... having a trusting relationship, having a Chief Executive and a Minister who just can't hit it off because that's a disaster / stop people filling up the place with people like themselves because that tends to be what happens /*

## **Age**

The issue of the age of WASPS employees was discussed by Experts and Influencers with the perception that age should not matter for innovation. In fact the point was made that both young and 'old' public servants could learn from each other and produce a dynamic workforce capable of innovation.

*/ and they just surprise you in all kinds of ways. ... we rather pompously suggested that they might set up some kind of system where their elders and betters could mentor them. And they liked that system, 'we'd like that system but we'd also like to mentor you! All you old's need to be mentored about the ways of the modern world and what's suitable for younger people' and I just thought that was brilliant. It just highlighted what was wrong with our mindset / it was really exciting to me to see the interchange in the people ... and see the willingness of young ... bureaucrats to challenge people 20 years their senior. There seemed to be a real respect for healthy interaction around important issues / I mean it's creating an atmosphere in which people can say things to their seniors that are wrong without being slapped down for it /*

### **'Job for Life' Concept**

Participants commented that there is a perception that when people entered the public service it was seen as taking 'a job for life' and that this concept was not necessarily attractive for younger people. It was felt that a more attractive option was actually to move in and out of the public sector, thus attracting more vibrant and innovative employees.

*/ I think there's a risk however that going into the public service is seen as taking a job for life and I think most 23 year olds get kind of worried about taking a job for life and perhaps if the public services looked more like a job that one could do for 5 years and then move into something else and maybe come back to it further down the track, perhaps then it would be more appealing /*

### **Leadership by Premier**

There were strong perceptions expressed by participants about the leadership required by the Premier of the state to ensure innovation is given a high regard. They recognised that while a Minister could also provide leadership in this area that the Premier needed to provide his/her 'strong endorsement', not just in a 'half hearted way'.

*/ it's about the Minister's of the day led by the Premier embracing [innovation], absolutely embracing it, not just doing it in a half-hearted way where when the first time it gets tough they walk away from it. But having a commitment to it and if you've got both of those working, if you've got your Head of Premier and Cabinet who would always have the Treasury with him on that process because it's in their interests to do it and you've got the Minister of the day with the Premier's strong endorsement, that's all you need, but you've got to have that / it shows lack of leadership from the top down doesn't it /*

Participants also discussed the extent to which a Government was led by the Premier or if innovation issues were 'decentralized', that is, driven from the various Ministers' offices.

*/ A lot depends upon your Premier and the extent to which they want to say I want to do things in this area. Now it needn't be only as general as that and different Premiers will push issues at different paces on that and sometimes you have a government who is very much driven out of the Premier's office other times it's very much decentralized like it's drive out of the Minister's office /*

### ***Leadership by Minister***

Issues of the 'power' of Ministers to effect innovation were discussed by Experts and Influencers. Participants had the perception that the success of innovation had much to do with the 'relative powerfulness' of particular Ministers, and their influence on Cabinet and other Ministers.

*/ depending again on another variable and that is the relative powerfulness of that individual Minister / Within the Ministry and within the Cabinet and within the government. Now I think there's quite a few examples of where Minister's, not so much the Government, but in the past of where Ministers have wanted to do things but have then been held back in doing that and there are more powerful Ministers who will always get their way /*

### ***Leadership by CEOs***

The importance of strong relationships between CEOs was perceived as important by Experts and influencers. In particular the importance of knowing that CEOs were reliable, and were capable of delivering on innovation was recognised as vital for an innovative sector.

*/ It's not that hard. It's simply a case of developing relationships, have close working relationships ... and have confidence CEO to CEO, if there's a strong working relationship. I mean so many times I agreed things for CEO's and frankly we agreed them without ministerial approval ... because I always knew we would get ministerial approval. So you'd have a way of doing things and it was always with those CEO's who I knew were on side and would deliver, which weren't a hell of a lot I might say/*

The importance of CEOs remaining apolitical was also discussed, and it was perceived that situations became difficult when CEOs play 'politics'

*/ Once you start stepping into the political process then the whole system falls down and there has been much history about where some Chief Executives won't play the game, they will play the politics of it and that's when bureaucracy really gets difficult and WA has got many examples of that /*

### ***Leadership Throughout The WASPS***

Although leadership by the Premier, Ministers and CEOs was perceived as important, leadership by all other managers and leaders throughout the sector was seen as vital for innovation. A considerably strong perception was evident that without effective leadership, the capacity to innovate was minimal. The leadership discussed by participants included all levels of the management of the sector.

*/ They [the WASPS] lack leadership as a consequence innovation is close to zero / the dominant issue is leadership, leadership, leadership at all levels not just a case of the CEO / But leadership is the most important one / that [a culture which support innovation] needs to be supported by that leadership at a range of levels so the CEO puts the framework in place, the Directors provide leadership for their own particular parts of the organization, it's actually the next category of people where you get the real leadership / but there's no walk and talk from management /*

The connection of leadership and culture was made, with participants perceiving that good leadership was required to create an effective culture for innovation. Effective leadership by senior management was seen as being able to influence a culture within the WASPS.

*/ firstly it's about leaders providing the right culture. Once you've got that in place you put the structures in place, the processes in place and at that end you start picking up a whole heap of these hygiene factors ... If there's an organization that lacks leadership, you haven't got an appropriate culture in place .... The big barrier is lack of leadership, lack of culture / irrespective of all that / I think it's got a lot to do with attitudes of senior management and the capacity of senior management to inspire and to lead their troops and that to me can permeate a culture. Now in some organizations ... even an inspired leader will find pockets of resistance /*

It was perceived that there was a need not only for the CEO to be an effective leader of innovation, but also for CEOs to employ good leaders throughout the sector in order to create an innovative WASPS.

*/ try and get the right leaders in place ... Encourage those people to both hire and develop leaders below them / it's not just that and particularly as you get into larger departments it has to go down a bit further. I mean obviously Director General's are crucial but that is also particularly in larger agencies. I mean I've got one example where the Director General is just, clearly has, he has embraced a lot of change. He's got a very well-functioning organization with a high level of high morale within the organization /*



Some participants were critical of the current leadership of the WASPS and their ability to foster and lead a strong culture and morale necessary for innovation. There was a perception by Experts and Influencers that leaders at the second and third tier of leaders within the WASPS were not very capable.

*/ You need to really foster people and make clear to people that if you want to be a bloody leader, not just a Director General but even an Executive that you really have to embrace the idea of developing a very strong culture and morale within your organization. That just being a show pony is not really sort of what leadership is about and that by fostering good and younger people or people with ideas. But you need a strong personality to do that / Well it would have to come from the leaders but it deteriorates quite dramatically as you drop. I mean the leaders are usually the cream of the crop but second level is very poor and third level is appalling. The 2IC's in most departments would not probably even get a job [out of the WASPS] / about the current leadership issue, he thought they were a pretty ordinary bunch ... big changes occurring in the leadership group of the WA public sector and that it's something that we do need to invest in /*

Again the concept of 'paradigm' was mentioned by participants who perceived that there was a need for a very different paradigm of leadership within the WASPS to succeed in innovation.

*One thing I think we don't do that I think innovation in the public sector should entail ... the interpersonal stuff ... if you're talking innovation by leadership in organizations, I think one of the best things they can do in an organization is innovate in the area of interpersonal relations between staff. So starting with the leadership team there needs to be a very different paradigm in use for senior leaderships in the public sector to operate effectively /*

Of concern was the specific perception that there was not a positive and trusting set of relationships among the executive groups of the WASPS. Reference was made to 'power plays' and positioning themselves among other leaders. Participants felt this was dysfunctional with leaders within the WASPS expending energy on protecting themselves.

*/ it's rare that there's a really what you call positive, trusting, adult set of relationships in those executive groups ... one area that I think we've got a lot to do in the public sector ... develop those qualities in the leadership group .... rather than people focusing on how they need to position themselves and the game playing that goes on, the power plays ... if people have got issues they need to work them through in an adult way rather than it being a game that's being played all the time and it gets in the way [of innovation] .... it might seem like a divergent point in relation to innovation and leadership but I think it's quite fundamental. I guess what I'm saying is probably in the majority, ... in the majority of the executives I've been on they've been highly dysfunctional groups of people and that's been a barrier to doing anything let alone innovation and you're distracted constantly by coping with that. It's like being in a dysfunctional family. It's just very hard to do things in that situation because you're forever guarding your back, watching your flank, coping with full on assaults /*

Participants saw leadership development programs as being irrelevant when the environment of the WASPS had not changed and little structural reform had taken place.

*/ And the problem with the public sector is they bang people through leadership programmes and hope to hell that's there's going to be some thing coming out the other end instead of doing it as part of a structured reform agenda and so they are burning a lot of dollars and people go back and the environment hasn't changed /*

### **Graduate Programs**

Graduate programs were identified in both phases as being an important vehicle for attracting innovative public servants into the public sector. The perception was that these programs were attracting good people with good experience.

*/There are agencies ... process in place where each year they hire 20 graduates, they put them through a 2 year program to develop their skills and competencies, at the end of the 2 year period ... offered a contract and at the end of the contract they're offered a permanent job. So they've got a beautiful way of feeding people in and they've been running for about 10 years and now starting to get some very good people with good experience. And there are other agencies that just don't have those programmes so they lose somebody, they then hire a raw graduate without the right support / a reasonably intake each year that they can cultivate /*

Retention of these innovative graduates was identified as an issue for the WASPS. In particular the ability for the sector to offer them challenges after five or so years was seen as crucial for retention.

*/ we're attracting some exceptionally good people, innovative people. The trick will be whether we have those people in 5 or 6 years time and we have to be able to offer them careers that provide them with those challenges. And innovation is one key part of that but there are other issues of, I guess, development that we need to be able to offer those people / I think we're doing OK at the graduate level, we are attracting them, it's the retention issue I guess is yet to be tested /*

It was apparent that the WASPS had not been consistent in the past over the intake into graduate programs and as a result there may be a 'demographic blip', indicated by a gap in creative and innovative people at the CEO level and people emerging.

*/ we went through a decade of non-recruitment of graduates in a targeted form and I think we're paying the penalty for that. We've got a gap between people at the top of the tree and the people coming through. There's a demographic blip where the sector is going to be struggling for a few years and by and large yes that can go to issues of creativity and innovation and they'll be a problem and to that extent we'll have to buy people in at different times /*

## **Remuneration Of Public Servants**

Experts and Influencers acknowledged that the low level of remuneration of public servants in Western Australia was an issue for the recruitment of innovative leaders. Participants made comparisons with other states in terms of salary level, economy and the isolation factor.

*/ the remuneration side has become an issue. The remuneration in Western Australia in the public sector is across the board below every other jurisdiction barring Tasmania ... well in fact you should think about it, Western Australia is a more dynamic economy, it's a large state regarding population wise now, it's got more going for it but I think South Australia for whatever reason has had to pay to get people there. We perhaps haven't done that and we're not getting them here / I think it [remuneration of public servants] has to be addressed and it will be addressed. So the isolated nature of the market combined with the remuneration issue I think is working against us at the moment / I've had a PhD in the door ... and walked out again ... I've lost him to ... simply because ... going to pay him far more than I can in this office /*

However, it was acknowledged that there was a 'lot of bending the rules at the top levels' to attract the best and most innovative people to the WASPS.

*/ salary scales for starters are such that you could never attract good people and it does seem to be even at that level, a whole lot of bending of the rules at the top levels so that if somebody really wants somebody to be there then they can do things which aren't part of the human resource structure which seems a strange way of operating / the public service has realized that particularly in certain agencies it needs to match private sector salaries. The pay gaps in the public sector are going up because of that /*

The resultant loss of innovative leaders from the WASPS as a result of low salary levels was acknowledged by participants.

*/ the pay that was ... actually paid to public servants I thought was very average. We lost over the last decade ... probably fifteen of our key ... administrators to the private sector both in this state and East, primarily because of pay /*

Participants also debated whether it was salary alone that would attract innovation people to the sector and there was an acknowledgement that there were also other benefits in being able to do innovative work.

*/ sense of self worth and appreciation by the organization which goes beyond simply the salary, though there's no question the salary's important / It's certainly one factor. I mean we all worry about what we earn but I think we all do our jobs for reasons other than money and so one of the nice things about innovation is it can be in some sense, a non-wage benefit of a job, doing exciting innovative policy work is fun /*

### ***Specialist and Technical Talent***

Experts and Influencers perceived that there may be an imbalance in the WASPS at present which recognises those with 'management' ability rather than specialist and technical ability, and that there was a tendency to promote management specialists into leadership positions. Participants believed that this would in some way favour a more 'conservative' approach to innovation.

*/ in the past ... the management structure ... promotion ... and so forth has favored, has privileged management as opposed to professional specialties and to that extent probably has favored a more conservative approach, I'm not rocking the boat etc than innovation. / You would want management structures structurally you'd want the agencies to reward expertise rather than management ability. That is to say recognize specialists in their fields who could be promoted and rewarded irrespective of how many people reported to them ... it means that senior people should be specialists who are actually passionate about the content and the output rather than simply performance measures and so forth /*

There was recognition that the only way for technical experts to be promoted is to undertake a managerial leadership position involving staff management and budgets and the like. There was the perception that to ensure innovation within the WASPS, that there has to be opportunities for people with a range of abilities.

*/ who really aren't good managers of people in a sense ... but they do a fantastic job within their areas in industry liaison ... they don't fit within the traditional public service model because what they do is they just know absolutely everything with what's going on ... I mean I go to them directly, I never go to the Director General in relation to anything to do with those two areas, I go to these guys because they know absolutely what's going on. But the only way they can get promoted is to sort of be given a job where they would have a lot of people under them. Well they don't want to go and manage things, they don't want to go and draw up budgets so we've got to look at sort of providing opportunities for people that have different abilities/ the specialists in the department report to an independent expert body has meant that ... continues to value expertise, technical expertise, professional expertise ... a higher value for technical expertise / it has been stronger and more technically adept ... has come to value technical expertise /*

### **Leadership Development**

The importance of leadership development was recognised by Experts and Influencers in enhancing innovation, in particular opportunities which allow leaders to learn from one another.

*/ One thing that could help is greater understanding by public servants as to the sort of innovative options that are out there so I think the Australian New Zealand Graduate School of Government is a good advance in this regard. One of the great things about ANSOG is it's pulling people from State and Federal bureaucrats from all different departments and bringing them together so there's a terrific potential for those students to learn from one another and to get ideas as to what's going on in other jurisdictions and just to, as a result of their time in ANSOG you expand the scope of what is possible, realize that what they're doing is just a small subset of what could be done /*

## **Summary of Human Resource Issues**

As in the first phase, it was evident that Expert and Influencers perceived that within the Human Resource category there were significant issues that impact on innovation in the WASPS. Examples of innovation given by participants in the second phase will now be discussed.

## **Examples of WASPS Innovation**

As in the first phase, Experts and Influencers in the second phase of the data collection were asked to give examples of innovation in the WASPS. Again the researcher asked this question firstly to identify if there were any common themes, issues and drivers in the examples given. Secondly the researcher wished to allow spontaneity for participants in summarizing the information they had already given in the interview related to barriers and enablers for innovation.

Because the examples given related to successful innovation the emerging information related to 'enablers' to innovation and provided clarity to the context in which this innovation occurred within the vast array of diverse public sector agencies. The following themes emerged during analysis of the examples given and again there was consistency between the themes emerging in phase one examples and the enabling themes emerging throughout the study.

Participants described a number of characteristics of organisations that had achieved innovation. It was perceived that an organisation that had been successful in innovation had appropriate delegations and effective structures.

*/ we changed a lot about how it worked, a lot about the authorities and delegation inside the ... Department was alive and well and the organization worked well as a consequence / good structures... lots of power to regional managers right so you've got a dispersal of power and a relatively flat power structure /*

Despite there being considerable perceptions in the two phases about the need to increase budget allocations in order to facilitate innovation, participants also recognised that a 'constant' or 'declining' budget was also a stimulus for innovation.

*/ we did a lot of different things inside that organization to try and live with a budget which actually never increased. If you leave aside new services which the agency was asked to take on and therefore it's budget moved as a consequence of that but I think the budget at best was held at nominal terms every year so we were living inside a constant and a declining real budget so we had to be innovative in what we did and we took on /*

Participants discussed the importance of 'young' public servants in the perceptions of successful innovation. In particular Experts and influencers felt that innovation was achieved when there was a culture of supporting and mentoring young public servants.

*/ Many young people came into the organization and stayed and worked there way through a career / great relationships between older guys and young people coming on, culture, the real traditional of mentoring and bringing people on and wanting to encourage the young ones /*

It was perceived that a supportive culture was critical to successful innovation within the WASPS. In giving examples of innovation, Experts and influencers described a supportive culture as one in which people are challenged, and one which encourages people with new ideas, concepts and processes. In addition the importance of good relationships was recognised.



*/ they have got a culture that challenges people / You've got other agencies where there is a culture that encourages people to explore concepts, explore ideas, generation new information ... where people challenged to come with new ideas, new concept, new processes not just from the research side of things / the whole culture is about producing something and how you do it and as well as an organization that just has a superb culture / good relationships throughout the organization ... because it's a healthy functional agency, that when change is promoted ... people aren't automatically dividing into the we support them, we don't support it brigade /*

Participants perceived that in successful innovation there was effective process which they articulated to be ones which placed few impediments in place, ones that were stable and ones that provided good feedback.

*/ they've got supporting processes in place / been more innovative here because the process has placed fewer impediments in the way ... because they know the process well and because the process is stable and in good shape / there's a closing of the loop in terms of feedback /*

Interestingly, participants perceived that the ready availability of resources was more important than abundant resources.

*/ they've got resources in place / resources for innovative ideas will be far more readily available / Despite the fact that they've got day to day pressures there's enough resources allocated for the purposes of innovation, finding out new information /*

The importance of a supportive and talented Minister was recognised when participants discussed successful innovation.

*/ they've got a Minister who's making some headway and getting results that than they would've been under the previous ... Minister or under the last three or four ... Ministers because there wasn't any confidence that the ... Minister or their CEO was actually delivering outcomes that the government wanted them to deliver /*

The seeking and provision of good advice was also perceived to be important for successful innovation.

*/ we went and got the best advice we could / providing advice to government from many levels. The advice was not stereotyped. The advice had a common theme ... but it came from many different sources /*

Many examples of innovation were given by participants who reflected a considerable amount of cooperation with industry groups, other levels of Government and academic environments.

*/ on a whole range of very innovative products of department and culture produced in cooperation with the universities. All breakthrough stuff which has been sold overseas, it's been patented / They still have research capacity even though governments is winding back funding in those as well but there are others out there who do it as well e.g., universities / 's strength is what .. does well and that is get out there and mix it with academia and industry/ it operates in a cooperative way between the state and industry and local government*

A common theme amongst examples of success in innovation was that 'best practice' ideas were sought from elsewhere and adapted to produce innovative solutions and products. This included learning from others.

*/ And thinking, learning from the best there is elsewhere in the world, looking how you can apply it here and then going on and doing it / and what we did was to look at ... two models for the best practice in the world ... and we put together a very innovative new approach / we took off the shelf a quite innovative ... system ... imported it and adapted it ... That's a rare example in my experience where there's been a quite innovative approach that gave the whole agency a leg up, didn't have to reinvent the wheel, we just took someone else's wheel and plonked it our machine, it didn't quite fit so we had to do a bit of turning of the wheel to make it fit WA but that is a pretty rare example where someone's looked outside the box to another agency and said well how have they managed this and how can we learn from that so taking a shortcut to innovation /*

Similarly to the first phase, examples of questioning the status quo were given and perceived to be an important factor in successful innovation.

*/ I said 'why are we doing it this way', it was just a genuine question and the answer came back 'oh this is the way we've done it for 10 years' ... who was prepared to say 'look we do need to do this differently!'*

### **Comments and Summary of Phase Two**

The findings of phase two have been presented in this chapter and the themes presented within the structural, cultural and human resource categories. As with phase one the presentation of the emergent themes from the 'examples' of WASPS innovation demonstrated consistency with the enablers to innovation perceived within the structural, cultural and human resource categories. This triangulation occurred in both phases of the study. The following table summarises the themes that emerged in phase two of the study.

**Summary of Findings: Phase Two – Experts and Influencers**

**Research Question Two: What are the perceptions of innovation amongst Experts and Influencers in the Western Australian State Public Sector?**

Category	Theme
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generation of new ideas</li> <li>• Doing things better in order to provide a vaster government.</li> <li>• Including 'technical, scientific or managerial' innovation.</li> <li>• Thinking outside the square</li> <li>• Different way of doing things</li> <li>• Implementing the good ideas</li> <li>• Being daring and holistic, looking at all facets of the business.</li> <li>• Evidenced based approach</li> </ul>
Importance of Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitates a focus on the future of the service to the public</li> <li>• Achievement of 'greater good' and better outcomes for the community.</li> <li>• Increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the WASPS</li> <li>• Increasing the prosperity of Western Australia.</li> <li>• Addressing the pressures for demand on the WASPS</li> <li>• Attracting excellent public servants to an innovative WASPS</li> </ul>
Current State of Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally not positive</li> <li>• Critical about innovation from a strategic, organisational and workforce perspective</li> <li>• Varied amongst the WASPS with a recognition that some agencies were very innovative and other 'appalling and deplorable'.</li> <li>• Little incentive within the WASPS for public sector employees to think and behave innovatively</li> <li>• Culture of the WASPS affected innovation causing a 'general reluctance' among public servants</li> <li>• Poor understanding of innovation and its importance</li> <li>• Critical about the 'type of people' attracted to the WASPS</li> <li>• Government's risk aversity affecting 'creativity and innovation'.</li> </ul>
Examples of WASPS Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear Authority and Delegation</li> <li>• Constant or Declining Budget</li> <li>• Young Public Servants</li> <li>• Supportive Culture</li> <li>• Effective Processes</li> <li>• Available Resources</li> <li>• Supportive and Talented Minister</li> <li>• Good Advice</li> <li>• Build and Improve on Ideas</li> <li>• Cooperation with Industry, Local Government and Universities</li> <li>• Searching for Best Practice</li> <li>• Questioning the Status Quo</li> </ul>

**Figure 11: Summary of Findings, Phase Two, Research Question Two**

**Summary of Findings: Phase Two – Experts and Influencers**

**Research Question Three: What are the barriers and enablers to innovation in the Western Australian Public Sector**

Category	Theme
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship between CEO and Minister</li> <li>• General Culture of WSPS</li> <li>• Risk</li> <li>• Recognition of Innovation</li> <li>• Culture of constraint</li> <li>• Public pressure</li> </ul>
Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources for innovation</li> <li>• Bureaucracy</li> <li>• DPC</li> <li>• Advice to government</li> <li>• Evaluation by government</li> <li>• Change of government / Minister</li> <li>• Goals of Government</li> <li>• Terms of Government</li> <li>• Federal government</li> <li>• Interdepartmental cooperation</li> <li>• Workload</li> <li>• Turnover and corporate knowledge</li> <li>• Restructuring</li> <li>• Centralization policy</li> <li>• PSMO</li> <li>• Isolation of WA</li> <li>• Output focus</li> <li>• Whole of government approach</li> <li>• Seed funding</li> <li>• Economic modeling</li> <li>• Marketing innovation</li> <li>• Innovation from elsewhere</li> <li>• Private sector</li> <li>• Political interference</li> <li>• Systematic approach</li> <li>• Ideas generation</li> <li>• Networks of influence</li> </ul>
Human Resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability of Ministers</li> <li>• Ability of CEOs</li> <li>• Promotion opportunities</li> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Performance management of SES</li> <li>• Movement and attrition</li> <li>• Recruitment into WASPS</li> <li>• SES recruitment for innovation</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• 'job for life' concept</li> <li>• Leadership by Premier</li> <li>• Leadership by Minister</li> <li>• Leadership by CEOs</li> <li>• Leadership throughout the WASPS</li> <li>• Graduate programs</li> <li>• Remuneration of public servants</li> <li>• Specialist and technical talent</li> <li>• Leadership development</li> </ul>

**Figure 12: Summary of Findings, Phase Two, Research Question Three**

## Summary

There was significant consistency in the perceptions of Leaders with those of Experts and Influencers. Whilst recognising that the following chapter will discuss the finding of this study, it should be noted, however, that Experts and Influencers perceived that the 'state' of innovation to be much more problematic than Leaders. This perception was evident in all aspects of the study.

The following is a summary of key findings from the study. These findings have been presented in depth in this chapter and will be integrated into the 'emergent model' to be discussed in the next chapter.

1. Leaders, Experts and Influencers perceive that innovation within the WASPS is problematic in extent, commitment and success.
2. Leaders, Experts and Influencers perceive innovation within the WASPS to be significantly important both on a day to day and strategic basis.
3. There is significant consensus by Leaders, Experts and Influencers on a definition of innovation within the WASPS.
4. When analysing examples of innovation within the WASPS there is an emergence of common themes. These themes are consistent with the perceptions of 'enablers' to innovation and include the following:
  - *being visionary, brave and future focused*
  - *creating a supportive culture*
  - *leading and supporting by the minister, premier and government*
  - *partnering and cooperation with industry, local government, private sector and universities*
  - *questioning the status quo*
  - *consulting with the public and responding to their demands*

- *investing resources, managing a constant or declining budget well and being transparent*
- *cooperating with other wasps departments*
- *searching for best practice and seeking good advice*
- *having clear authority, delegations and processes and giving effective feedback*
- *investing in research*
- *employing young public servants*
- *adding value and commercializing*
- *adopting a range of strategies*
- *allowing employees time to explore, build and improve on ideas*

5. Leaders, Experts and Influencers perceived both enablers and barriers to innovation within the culture of the WASPS with the overall perception being that the culture was not supportive of innovation.
  
6. Leaders, Experts and Influencers perceived both enablers and barriers to innovation within the structural aspects of the sector, with the overall perception being that there were significant structural issues negatively affecting innovation.
  
7. Leaders, Experts and Influencers perceived both enablers and barriers to innovation within the human resource aspects of the sector, with the overall perception being that there were significant human resource issues negatively affecting innovation.
  
8. Leaders, Experts and Influencers perceived that leadership pervaded structural, cultural and human resource issues and had significant influence on the problematic state of innovation within the WASPS.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

### Introduction

At the onset, this research sought to explore and describe the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector (WASPS), firstly amongst Leaders, and secondly amongst Experts and Influencers. It further sought to describe the barriers and enablers to innovation in the WASPS and subsequently to discuss the enhancement of innovation in the sector. The objectives of the study led to the following research questions being identified:

- 1. What are the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst leaders?*
- 2. What are the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst experts and influencers?*
- 3. What are the barriers and enablers to innovation in the Western Australian Public Sector?*
- 4. How can innovation in the Western Australian Public Sector be enhanced?*



This chapter will focus on the model that emerged from the findings. The discussion begins with consideration of the context of the WASPS in terms of reform initiatives that have contributed to innovation within the sector. A brief description of the model, which is termed the 'emergent model', will follow. Following the scene setting, the discussion will reveal how the findings contributed to the 'emergent model'. This will include a discussion of the perceptions of innovation amongst Leaders, Experts and Influencers, a discussion of the barriers and enablers to innovation in the WASPS, and the enhancement of innovation. The influence of leadership on innovation will also be discussed. Variables, treated as presage variables in this study, will be identified.

## **Context Considerations**

### ***Introduction***

The previous chapter outlined, in detail, the findings of the study. It was important to present these findings in such detail to ensure the researcher accurately reflected the voice of the participants of the study.

Before an in-depth discussion takes place about the findings, the emergent model and ways to enhance innovation within the WASPS, it is necessary to accurately portray the developments within the sector concerning innovation. This will ensure that the findings of the study are situated and given meaning within the specific context of the Western Australian State Public Sector. The issues that will be discussed in this section and which will inform the subsequent discussion and recommendations include; the reform agenda, joined-up government initiatives, structural reorganisations, leadership development programs, technological advancements, partnerships and public consultation strategies.

## ***Reform Agenda***

In June 2001, the Machinery of Government Review (2001) was initiated to examine the number of entities in the WASPS and to enhance the operations of the public sector. This review resulted in a halving of the number of Government departments in Western Australia. (Office of Shared Services, 2006) An additional recommendation from the review was the need to investigate ways of reducing corporate costs through greater sharing of corporate support services.

Subsequent to this, a taskforce was formed in 2002 by the then Premier to undertake a review into the effective delivery of Government priorities arising from the recommendations of the above review (Machinery of Government Review, 2001). The agenda of this taskforce was to examine public sector agency's programs, functions, activities and services to determine their efficiency and effectiveness and to identify areas of expenditure where a whole of Government approach could produce better cost effectiveness.

In December 2002, the Cabinet of the then Government endorsed the majority of recommendations of the report and in January 2003, the Functional Review Implementation Team (FRIT) was established to implement the endorsed recommendations (Office of Shared Services, 2006). Some of the more significant recommendations in terms of innovation are outlined in this chapter, however descriptions of the reform initiatives will be limited to an overview, as an in-depth analysis and evaluation of these initiatives is outside the scope of this study. The descriptions given here seek only to outline the reform developments for the sector, enabling a more contextualised and informed discussion to take place about the enhancement of innovation within the WA State Public Sector.

### ***Public Sector Structures***

As discussed above, the Machinery of Government Review (2001) was initiated to examine the number of entities in the WASPS and to enhance the operations of the public sector. This review recognised that there was an excessive number of overlapping Government agencies and that generally the sector was fragmented in nature, resulting in some inefficiency in the delivery of service. A key recommendation was the reduction of the number of WASPS departments from 46 to 23. This restructuring has taken place incrementally since the review.

### ***Shared Services***

The Office of Shared Services (OSS) was established in 2005 in response to a key recommendation of the above review to reduce the corporate costs within the public sector through greater sharing of corporate support services. The model implemented by the OSS provides an integrated framework to lever economies of scale through consolidation, standardisation and simplification of corporate support services. The OSS is also responsible for the coordination of other 'whole-of government' initiatives from time to time. It is anticipated by the OSS (Office of Shared Services, 2006) that in the medium to long term, it will achieve:

- Increased efficiencies across the sector, anticipating that it will save the Government in excess of \$55 million from 2008-2009,
- Standardisation and improvement of corporate policies and procedures across the sector,
- The freeing up of agencies to concentrate on their core business rather than the provision of their own corporate services,
- Further opportunities for continuous improvement.

### ***Procurement Reform***

Procurement Reform was identified as part of the recommendations of the FRIT and, as a result, the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) was established within the Department of Treasury and Finance. The OGP was established to reform the contracting services of Government in order to achieve savings for the sector. Specifically it does this through a variety of strategic sourcing initiatives and procurement process improvements and by enhancing the knowledge, skills and professionalism of public servants in this area (Department of Treasury and Finance, 2003).

### ***E-Government***

An initiative resulting from the Review into the Effective Delivery of Government Priorities was the establishment of the Office of E-Government, designed to better coordinate public sector on-line opportunities. The Department of Premier and Cabinet reports that the Office is responsible for the strategic transformation of the operations of Government, using technology as a tool to improve internal efficiency, service delivery to citizens and increased community participation. (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2006). In 2004, the then Premier, Dr Geoff Gallop, launched an 'E-Strategy' for the WASPS which, according to the Department of Premier and Cabinet (2006), was a roadmap for the sector to progress to a transformational model of government service delivery, with a particular emphasis on improved opportunities for community participation. The three goals articulated in the strategy were as follows:

- service delivery: more personalized and accessible services that are easy for the community to use,
- internal efficiency: improved processes within and between agencies leading to lower costs and improved services,

- community participation: easier interaction so that people can understand and contribute to government.

### ***Science and Innovation***

The Innovate WA policy, referred to earlier in this study, was coordinated by the Office of Science and Innovation. In mid 2006, this office was transferred from the Department of Premier and Cabinet to the Department of Industry and Resources. Its role included the identification and promotion of science and innovation opportunities, as well as promoting the research capabilities of the state (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2006).

### ***Leadership and Workforce Development***

Initiatives to develop the leadership capabilities within the public sector have been extensive. The Leadership Development Strategy (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2006) for example, reflects the strategic workforce priorities and leadership skills needed for modern day public sector leadership. Specifically, it defines the skills and behaviours required of Leaders within the Senior Executive Service and provides an assessment process for the performance appraisal of these leaders.

In recent times, the WA Government has joined ANZSOG (Australian and New Zealand School of Government) and facilitated public sector scholarships for leaders to pursue Master level degrees. Articulation arrangements are also in place with Curtin University to provide post graduate programs through the Business School and the John Curtin Institute of Public Policy.

### ***Strategic Planning and Leadership***

The 'Framework for Strategic Management of the WA Public Sector' has been recently reviewed which provides a basis for the management of the public sector, its people and resources, in achieving the long term goals of the Government (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2006). The framework articulates five strategic goals. The first four relate to better services, jobs and economic growth, lifestyle and the environment, and regional development. Importantly, in the context of this study, the fifth goal relates to governance and public sector improvement, specifically in developing and maintaining a skilled, diverse and ethical public sector serving the Government with consideration of the public interest. The strategic outcomes for this goal are important in the context of this study and include:

- A skilled and capable public sector workforce,
- A whole of government approach to planning and decision making,
- A public sector that is responsive to the evolving needs of the community,
- Independent oversight that contributes to a more accountable public sector.

The 'Strategic Management Committee' comprising the Director Generals of key government departments and chaired by the Premier, meet about 5 times a year to consider the strategic goals of the Government. Its agenda includes the identification of planning priorities, improvement initiatives and improvements in coordination and integration of services (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2006).

In conclusion, it can be seen that the WASPS has indeed initiated many strategies to enhance innovation and produce a more responsive and efficient public sector. This section, while outlining just some of the major initiatives, does not seek to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies. Its purpose is to inform the context of this study. This context, together with the findings will form the basis for the discussion to follow.

### **The Emergent Model**

A key research question for the study focuses on the enhancement of innovation within the sector. It is proposed that innovation can be enhanced by adopting a more strategic view of innovation and the 'emergent model' developed supports this perspective. The 'emergent model' is built on the perceptions of Leaders, Experts and Influencers and is augmented with contemporary literature on innovation. A full depiction of the model is presented below followed by a discussion of each component in greater detail.

# The Emergent Model: A Strategic Approach To Innovation

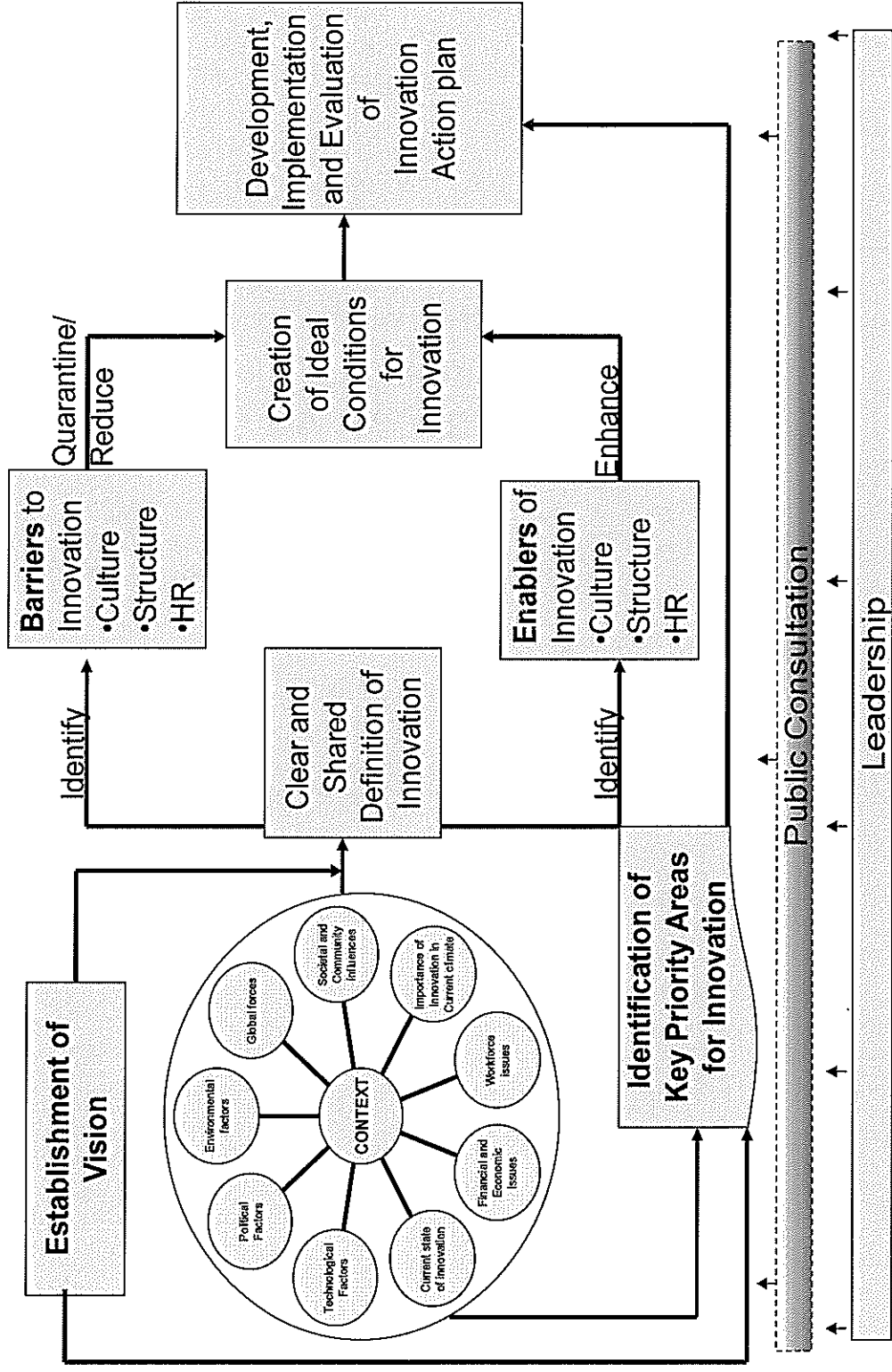


Figure 13: The Emergent Model - In Full



## **Perceptions of Innovation**

Participants were asked about their perceptions of innovation in the WASPS. The following categories emerged from the general perceptions among participants. These categories include:

1. Discussion about the *current state* of innovation in the WASPS as perceived by Leaders, Experts and Influencers.
2. Discussion about the *definition* of innovation in the WASPS as perceived by Leaders, Experts and Influencers.
3. Discussion about the *importance* of innovation perceived by Leaders, Experts and Influencers.
4. Discussion about *examples* of innovation in the WASPS perceived by Leaders, Experts and Influencers.

The categories will now be discussed.

### ***Current State of Innovation***

From the findings there appears to be a strong perception by Leaders, as well as Experts and Influencers, that innovation in the WASPS is minimal. Participants perceived that the sector was a 'lame beast', 'appalling' and 'deplorable' in regards to its capacity to innovate. Though this was generally the case, the findings also indicated that there were isolated pockets in the WASPS where the capacity to innovate was good. Many felt that innovation was 'spotted' in the WASPS according to the agency or department, its resources, size, and level of bureaucracy and willingness to embrace innovation. A 'silo' mentality emerged as a factor that affected innovation between departments.

While there appeared to be willingness to embrace innovation amongst Leaders, many participants were skeptical about the strategic commitment of the WASPS to innovation, referring to systematic problems and lack of leadership and direction. Leaders perceived that there was a willingness to accept the status quo within the sector and that there was much rhetoric, but little action, when it came to innovation. The findings indicated that this perception was shared by Experts and Influencers who perceived that there was little incentive within the WASPS for public sector employees to think and behave innovatively. There was a strong perception amongst participants that the culture of the WASPS affected innovation causing a 'general reluctance' among public servants to be innovative. The findings also indicated that participants generally expressed a depth of disillusionment about innovation and indicated significant levels of frustration within the sector about innovation.

Participants recognised that innovation in the WASPS was affected by human resource factors and were generally critical about the 'type of people' attracted to the WASPS. Despite this, there was recognition that all levels of the sector were capable of innovation, including 'grass roots' employees. There was a perception that the 'current state' of innovation was problematic because of inadequate leadership of innovation by members of the SES. This leadership was influenced by what was perceived as 'politics' at the more senior levels of the WASPS and this was reinforced when comparisons were made of the WASPS with the private sector. In this regard the findings indicated a perception that there were great differences between the capacity of the WASPS to innovate in comparison to the private sector because of the added dimension of public demands and political pressure.

Interestingly a difference in the perceptions of participants was that Leaders discussed the 'current state' from an operational, workforce and personal perspective, while Experts and Influencers described innovation from a more strategic perspective perceiving that the sector had not come to terms with the need for innovation, a clear understanding of innovation, and its long term importance in the sector.

The findings indicated that the overall perception of the 'current state' of innovation in the WASPS can best be described as inadequate for that expected of a public sector that had been given political endorsement to be more innovative. Despite there being isolated pockets on innovation, the overall perception was that the 'state of innovation' was problematic, that the culture of the WASPS was risk averse, and that there was a lack of leadership for innovation. These findings contributed significantly to the 'emergent model'.

### ***Definition of Innovation***

There was a consistency in the definition of innovation given by all participants in the study. A broad perception of the definition was evident with Leaders recognising innovation as something 'new', rather than an improvement of a process. Experts and Influencers perceived that innovation was about the 'generation of new ideas' and 'doing things better' in order to provide a vaster government. Participants described innovation broadly to include 'technical, scientific or managerial' innovation.

Participants included the importance of 'application' in their definition, with innovation not just being about an idea, but emphasizing the importance of actually 'implementing' the good ideas. Consistent in the definitions given in this study was the concept that innovation was seen as thinking 'outside the box' and 'thinking outside the square' and that, in a public sector context, the definition had a dimension of 'interest of the wider community and public good'.

The findings indicate that Experts and Influencers had a broader definition than Leaders and their definition of innovation included a focus on the 'culture' of the public sector highlighting the need to be 'daring' and holistic and look at all facets of the sector. Experts and Influencers also perceived that being 'evidence based' was essential when defining innovation in the public sector.

The findings of this study highlighted the need for an agreed definition that gives shared meaning to innovation within the WASPS. This definition needs to take into account the context of the public sector and, as such, it is advocated that any definition includes reference to innovation being in the interest of the community of Western Australia and the greater public good. This allows for more meaningful debate about innovation and opportunities for consensus gaining before the implementation of an innovation. Any agreed definition of innovation for the WASPS must consider innovation more broadly than just from a research and development perspective. Supporting a comprehensive, inclusive and shared understanding of innovation is another important dimension of the 'emergent model'.

### ***Importance of Innovation***

The findings indicate that there was an overwhelming perception by all participants that innovation in the WASPS was vitally important with the words 'critical' and 'fundamental' being used consistently to describe its importance. The findings surfaced a wide range of reasons, as provided by Leaders, Experts and Influencers, as to why innovation was important and these have been detailed in the previous chapter.

### ***Examples of Innovation***

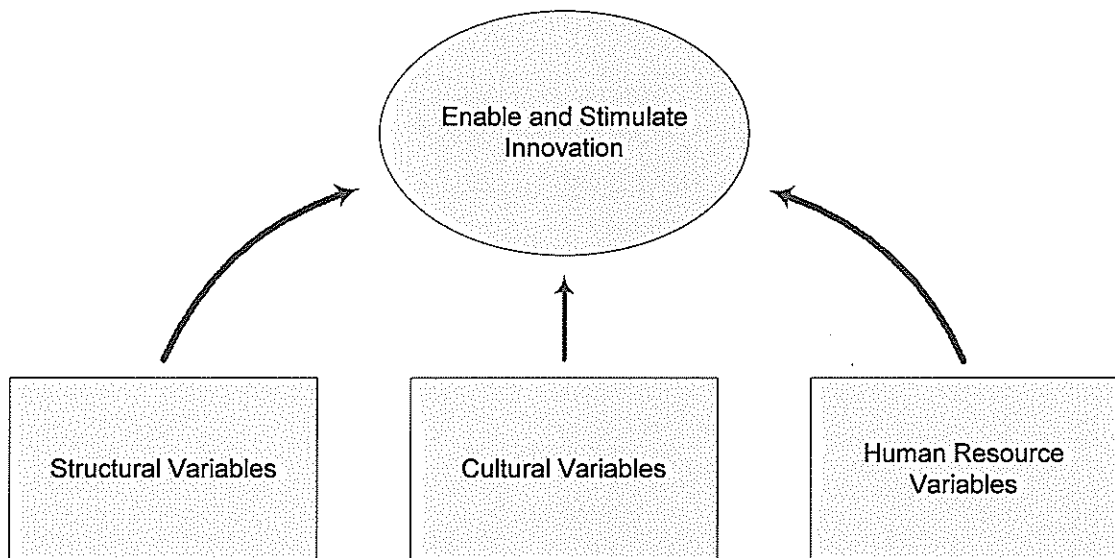
What was evident from the findings is that a supportive culture is vital to enhance innovation within the WASPS. This culture needs to encourage employees to be visionary, brave and future focused, and also allow them to question the 'status quo'. An environment that allows employees time to explore, build and improve on ideas is important for innovation, as is encouragement and ability to cooperate with other WASPS departments.

Similarly the findings indicate that the ability to partner and collaborate with industry, local government, private sector and universities is crucial for innovation in the public sector, as are mechanisms to consult with the public and respond effectively to their demands. Further, having clear authority and delegation is an enhancer of innovation, as is the investment of resources and the flexibility to adopt a range of strategies. Finally, effective leadership and support by Ministers, the Premier and by Government is an important aspect for successful innovation.

The analysis of the findings related to examples of successful innovation collaborate key cultural, structural and human resource categories that were perceived to be enablers for innovation. These perceptions are integrated into the 'emergent model' under the heading of 'creating an ideal environment for innovation'.

## Barriers and Enablers

Barriers and enablers to innovation in the WASPS that emerged in the study fell neatly into three distinct but interrelated categories being cultural, structural and human resource issues. The rationale for categorising the findings in this way was adapted from a view of innovation advocated by Robbins, et al, (2006) where three sets of variables were identified to stimulate innovation. The following diagram details how the concepts were viewed in this study.



**Figure 14: Categories of Enablers for Innovation (adapted from Robbins, et al, 2006)**

The above categorisation is a key component of the emergent model forming the basis for the creation of ideal conditions for innovation. Being a key component of the model, the following sections will synthesise the findings and discuss implications under the categories of key structural themes, key cultural themes and key human resource themes.

## ***Key Cultural Themes***

The cultural themes emerging from the research were identified in the findings chapter, with in-depth reference to the specifics of each phase. A consistent emergent theme was that innovation could be enhanced by a supportive culture, which while ensuring accountability, could encourage creativity, freedom and flexibility. The celebration of success through a variety of means including the Premier's awards and recognition by Leaders within the WASPS was seen as important for innovation, as was encouraging the generation and flow of good ideas.

A supportive culture for innovation also valued the talents of staff and encouraged staff to debate existing practices and new ideas. The ideal culture practiced devolved responsibility for problem solving to 'front line' staff and had clear lines of accountability. An important aspect of the 'emergent model' sees a greater tolerance for risk as an enabler for innovation in the WASPS. This includes a greater preparedness by Leaders, Politicians, Ministers and the public to accept risk.

The following section will focus the discussion on the several dimensions of culture that are integral to the 'emergent model' and are well grounded in the findings. These include:

- *Public sector culture*
- *Leadership*
- *Need for trust, and*
- *Risk taking.*

## Public Sector Culture

As discussed, the findings clearly indicate the need for the WASPS culture to be one which enables innovation. The culture of an organisation or sector refers to a system of values, assumptions, beliefs and norms that members share and reflects common views about how things are done around the organisation (Bartol, Tein, Matthews and Martin, 2005). Martins and Terblanche (2003) point out the assumptions are

*'maintained in the continuous process of human interaction (which manifests itself in attitudes and behaviour), in other words as the right way in which things are done or problems should be understood in the organisation' (p 67).*

Innovative organisations tend to have similar cultures which encourage experimentation, and reward both success and failures (Hamel, 2000; deGues, 1997). The characteristics of innovative cultures outlined in the literature, is in harmony with the findings of the study. Robbins, et al, (2006) summarised these well and they include:

- *Acceptance of ambiguity: rather than objectivity and specificity,*
- *Tolerance of the impractical: such as impractical ideas and creative answers to 'what-if' questions,*
- *Low external controls: keeping rules and regulations to a minimum,*
- *Tolerance of risk: employees being encouraged to experiment without fear of consequences,*
- *Tolerance of conflict: encouragement of diversity of opinions,*
- *Focus on ends rather than means: encouragement of consideration of alternative routes to meeting end goals, and*



- *Open systems focus: to allow the organisation to respond to rapidly changing environments.*

*(p 374 – 375)*

Much debate has been evident about whether the creation of a culture that enhances innovation is conducive to the traditional culture of the public sector. Gawthrop (1999) wrote that the values of the public sector of benevolence and justice could be diminished by an increasing emphasis on creating a more innovative and entrepreneurial public sector. This included an emphasis on performance management and increased efficiency of the sector. Some scholars agree that being innovative could undermine the public sector's values of due process and accountability (Goodsell, 1993) and ethical fairness, robustness and resilience (Hood, 1991). However others argue that the values that support innovation and the more traditional values of the public sector can co-exist (Kernaghan, 2000, Cohen and Eimicke, 1999).

The findings of the study supported by the contemporary literature, indicates the need for the 'emergent model' to consider the creation of an ideal culture to support innovation. While this is integrated into all aspects of the model, the importance of 'leadership' of an ideal culture cannot be underestimated and will now be discussed. It should be noted that leadership also emerged as a significant theme under the human resource category, and will be discussed later in the chapter.

## **Leadership and Culture**

The findings surfaced a strong perception that it was requisite for leaders within the sector to be capable of establishing and leading a culture conducive of innovation. Again the findings are supported by the literature on the influence of leadership on organisational culture (Parry and Proctor-Thomson, 2003; Pool, 2000). Along with the effect of leadership on culture, an interesting perspective on organisational culture is detailed by Gordon, in Parry and Proctor-Thomson (2003). This perspective proposes that organisational culture is also a product of industry and environmental demands from customers, competitors, and society, from which certain values develop concerning the 'right things to do', forming the basis of the organisational culture. If this perspective is applied to the public sector, extensive industry and public consultation and education would be necessary in order to create an organisational culture within the WASPS conducive to innovation. Inherent in this view is the importance of the leadership by SES Leaders in the area of public consultation.

As was established in the findings, the influence of effective leadership by the Senior Executive Service of the WASPS should not be underestimated in the creation and maintenance of a culture that enhances innovation. While the discussion of whether leadership influences culture, or culture influences leadership is ongoing, it is most beneficial to discuss the interplay that exists between leadership and culture. This interplay is recognised by Hampden-Turner, in Parry and Proctor-Thomson (2003) who argues that leaders help to create, shape and develop organisational culture, but at the same time this culture helps to shape all of its members. He also believes that individuals can play a leadership role in transforming organisational culture.

As is recognised in the 'emergent model' the leadership of culture can be enhanced by teams and individuals questioning the values and underlying assumptions of the public sector and being more attuned to uncertainty and changing external environments. Innovation can be enhanced in this way by allowing the organisational culture to adapt and transform to changing conditions.

### **Trust and Culture**

It has been argued that the culture of an organisation refers to a system of values, assumptions, beliefs and norms that members share (Bartol, Tein, Matthews and Martin, 2005). Given this, then the value of trust within the public sector needs to be considered when enhancing innovation. This view was strongly supported by the findings. The consequences of trust within organisations are well documented and include acceptance of influence, organisational commitment, job satisfaction, mutual learning and high levels of cooperation and performance (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; Boisot, 1995; Costa, Roe and Taillieu, 2001).

The 'emergent model' recognises that when applying the dynamics of trust to the public sector and in regards to innovation, a more context bound understanding may be necessary. Processes of trust may vary across situations, and be dependent on the nature of risks involved (Smid, Bijlsma, Derksen and Bernaert, 2005). As was evident in this research, the context of the public sector may mean that situations are influenced by political factors, the relationship between Ministers and CEOs and the degree of risk in regards to enhancement or disruption of service to the public.

The research findings strongly support the consideration of a dynamic 'emergent model' that is sensitive to how trust and distrust develops within organisations (Weick, 1995; March and Olsen, 1975; Sitkin and Stickel, 1996). When applied to, for example, the relationship between Ministers and CEOs, it could be argued that Ministers come to trust CEOs who are perceived as able to bring about desirable events, such as successful innovation of a service, according to the Minister's perceptions of what is important for the public sector. As was evident in the findings, a poor relationship between a Minister and CEO may result from a situation where distrust creates barriers that stimulate an escalating spiral of formality and distance between parties. The findings in this regard are supported by the literature where distrust, based on feelings of value-incongruity, affects the assumption of risk inherent in innovation (Sitkin and Stickel, 1996).

### **Risk Taking**

The findings identified a substantially risk averse nature within the WASPS. While the results indicated a low propensity by the WASPS to tolerate risk, it is important for this to occur if innovation is to be enhanced. Saleh and Wang (1993) recognise that innovative businesses are expected to take some risk and that this risk is characterised by

*'quick manoeuvring with conscious efforts to avoid mistakes' (p15)*

and being able to make a response that would be appropriate to the degree of risk.

There is a significant need for education about risk management within the WASPS, with the aim being recognition that the basic principles of risk taking and risk management should be no different in the public sector as to any other business or system, and that sensible risk taking can still be encouraged within a public sector environment.

### ***Key Structural Themes***

The themes emerging from the research related to structure are discussed in the findings chapter, with in-depth reference to the specific emerging themes of each phase. After a preliminary discussion of structures, the following section will focus on organisational structure and resources to locate these important dimensions in the 'emergent model'.

As outlined in the previous chapter, Leaders, Experts and Influencers perceived both enablers and barriers to innovation when dealing with structural aspects of the sector. The overall perception highlighted in the findings was that there were significant structural issues that were barriers to innovation. Participants felt that the 'bureaucracy' of the WASPS affected innovation by encouraging a 'silo' mentality amongst departments, where despite recent developments such as 'whole of government' initiatives to encourage shared services, public servants were not encouraged to work inter and intra departmentally on innovative solutions to public sector challenges.

The findings clearly indicated that within the bureaucracy of the WASPS, decision making was not devolved appropriately to encourage innovation amongst the less senior ranks of the sector. It was also apparent from the findings that delegations of authority within the WASPS were not clear.

The structural issues relating to communication and networking featured extensively amongst participants who perceived that these factors negatively affected innovation within the WASPS. In particular it was felt that initiatives between departments such as working parties and forums encouraged innovation and that these needed to include public servants from the many layers of the sector. The findings indicated the benefits of many forms of communication, ideas flow and networking between and within departments, and also horizontally and vertically within the sector.

The structure of Government was also perceived as affecting innovation within the WASPS. This included the effect that changes of Government and Ministers had on innovation with participants perceiving the innovation potential came to a standstill within the sector during an election period. Similarly, while a change of Minister was sometimes seen as a potential enabler to innovation, particularly when the previous Minister had stifled innovation, this was dependant upon how long it took for the new Minister to become familiar with the operations of his/her new portfolio. The findings indicate that consideration of political cycles and the desire for re-election compromised the Government's ability to be visionary and innovative about the long term future of the state and that, as a consequence, short term planning was the only focus.

As outlined in the findings chapter, the policies of the sector also impacted on innovation. Although highly necessary for an accountable and well functioning WASPS, it was perceived that the tight regulation of the WASPS offered public sector employees and leaders some excuse to avoid innovation in their work. The policy frameworks that related to employment, accountability, output measures, intellectual property and risk were all perceived as contributing towards the avoidance of innovation.

The findings also indicated that structural challenges to innovation were evident in relation to the need to focus on public demands for service. These challenges were perceived as both enablers and barriers to innovation. On the one hand it was perceived that the pressure and demands that existed, in responding to public need, did not allow for innovation, while on the other hand participants perceived that constant public demand encourages public servants to find new and innovative ways of responding to the workloads of the service.

Resourcing surfaced as an important dimension for innovation. Poor resourcing of the WASPS was seen as a stimulus for finding innovative solutions to resource limitation. The provision of additional funding as well as the flexibility to re-allocate funding within an allocated budget was thought to be an innovation enhancer.

The next section will focus on the two dimensions of structure that are integral to the 'emergent model' and therefore need greater discussion. These two dimensions are organisational structure and resources.

### **Organisational Structures**

As discussed, the findings of this study indicate that the organisational structure of the WASPS did little to enhance innovation within the sector. The literature clearly indicates that high levels of innovation are usually supported by appropriate organisational structures. Organic structures, because of the low formalisation, centralisation and work specialisation, facilitate the flexibility, adaptability and cross fertilisation necessary for innovation (Robbins, et al, 2003). The relationship between organic structures and innovation has been recognised since the early work on innovation by Burns and Stalker (1961). The benefits include a greater capacity within the organisation for horizontal and vertical cooperation and communication and delegated authority and empowerment, all important for innovation.

Due to the large and complex nature of the WASPS, an organic structure may not be most appropriate for enhancing innovation. It could be argued that many of the advantages of an organic structure for innovation could be achieved in other ways, through frequent restructuring and redefining of job roles (Saleh and Wang, 1993; Schoonhoven and Jelinek, 1990). This approach would allow the public sector to respond to the external need of the community where the structure was guided by public need. Interestingly, restructuring was perceived as both an enabler and barrier to innovation in the findings of this study.

It was also evident in the findings that Leaders, Experts and Influencers had a good grasp of the structural issues affecting innovation and did not perceive that there was only one ideal structural solution. This view is supported by the literature. Prather and Gundry (1995) also argue that there may not be only one ideal structure for innovation. They suggest five factors which need to be taken into account in decisions about organisational structure and all are relevant within a public sector context. These factors are: the external environment including the nature of the industry; the market; the organisation's mix of products, services and processes; technological change; and the manager's preference.



If one assumes that an eclectic mix of structures would be appropriate for the WASPS, the importance of communication within these structures must also be stressed (Humphrey, 1997). While this topic is covered elsewhere in this chapter, it needs to be stressed that an important consideration is how well any structure enhances communication flow. The team approach was evident in the findings as being an enabler to innovation within the sector; hence an important consideration for the WASPS is how well the organisational structure supports the team approach necessary for innovation. The importance of structure supporting the team approach, as identified in this study and in the literature, is an important enabler for innovation (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1997). The aspects of structure as discussed above are inherent in the 'emergent model' and are important in creating conditions that will encourage innovation.

## **Resources**

As discussed, the allocation of resources was perceived as both an enabler and barrier to innovation in the sector. The findings highlighted the need for more flexibility in the way resources are allocated within the sector and this was identified as the key to enhancing success in innovation. Parry and Proctor-Thomson (2003) propose that in the allocation of resources for innovation, there may be an excessive reliance on bargaining for resources as a means of resource allocation. Instead of bargaining for resources they propose that people in public sector organisations might determine the best allocation of resources for

*'the good of the total work unit, organisation and/or nation' (p 376).*

This interesting notion proposes that resource allocation should be determined on the criteria of creativity or innovation, rather than the

*'traditional criteria of, for example, relative power, perceived equity and perceived need' (p 376).*

The emergence in the findings of several dimensions of resourcing for innovation indicates that this issue within the public sector lends itself to further research. However, in a general sense, regards for resourcing was integrated into the 'emergent model' as one of the many aspects of the 'consideration of the context of the WASPS', integral to the strategic approach to innovation.

### ***Key Human Resource Themes***

The following section focuses on the human resource category that emerged, and will cover several themes within this important dimension. The human resource themes that surfaced from the findings are outlined in detail in the previous chapter. Along with cultural and structural categories, the findings chapter offers much insight about these categories. The overarching human resource theme relate to leadership within the WASPS, specifically leadership by the Senior Executive Service and by the Premier and the Government of Western Australia.

The findings surfaced the perspective that the recruitment practices of the WASPS did not always result in employees capable and supportive of innovation. Specifically related to the recruitment of leaders for the Senior Executive Service, participants felt that a more discerning approach to the issue of recruiting 'specialist' leaders versus more 'generalist' leaders was needed. While the present policy adopted a more generalist approach, it was perceived that this choice should be dependant upon a number of considerations including the circumstances of the department, their needs into the future and the change imperative of the department.

There was strong agreement among participants that there needed to be more of a focus on the training and development needs of public sector employees with a focus on preparing them to work innovatively. Suggestions included the enhancement of leadership development programs for leaders, and emerging and potential leaders, as well as an increased commitment to graduate programs which facilitated the employment of innovative, new graduates into the sector.

Overall, participants perceived employee movement within the WASPS to be an enhancer for innovation, allowing employees to gain an appreciation of potential interdepartmental initiatives. Similarly, attrition out of the WASPS was seen as an enabler, but only when the sector was able to recruit previous employees back into the sector after they had gained valuable experience in other sectors, including the private and not-for-profit sector. Participants felt that an affective and fair performance management system was an enabler for innovation and that the WASPS were presently weak in this area. Aligned with this, a more fair promotional system based on rewarding innovation efforts was perceived as being needed along with remuneration incentives and other rewards.

As discussed, leadership emerged as the overarching human resource theme in this study and warrants further discussion.

### **Leadership**

Leadership pervaded all aspects of the findings and included all spheres of leadership such as the ability and commitment in the leadership of innovation throughout the sector. Overall the most apparent findings was that there was a dearth of effective leadership of innovation throughout the sector, including at CEO and senior management level, as well as at political level.

## **Leadership by Senior Executive Service**

The findings demonstrated that successful leaders of innovation within the WASPS possessed specific skills including the ability to lead a supportive culture, the ability to see possibilities and have a vision about the future. In addition, leaders capable of innovation, and of leading innovation, appeared to be able to rise above politics and to influence others, including the Government, in adopting innovative approaches.

These findings are supported by the literature on leadership and innovation. Borins (2000) for example examined the perception of public sector leaders who were successful innovators. These leaders were seen to be 'enterprising' with the qualities of these leaders including the ability of the leader to exercise creative problem solving skills, of being proactive in dealing with problems and with the ability to build support through the use of organisational channels. This study supported previous studies by the same author (Borins, 1998) where it was found that successful innovators in the public sector had the above abilities as well as a clear vision of innovation, an ability to objectively evaluate innovation and an ability to work through persuasion and accommodation rather than 'politics'. Other scholars such as Behn (1998) write that public sector leaders should exercise leadership in innovation by taking

*'astute initiatives'*

that enable the public sector to achieve its purposes today, but also to create a capacity to

*'achieve its objectives of tomorrow' (Pg 220).*

## Leadership by the Premier and Government

Leadership of the Government of Western Australia lies with the Premier of the state and there was a strong perception that leadership of innovation, by the Premier, was an important component of success in the sector. There was little evidence provided by participants of strong strategic leadership in the area of innovation, by the Premier or Government, with the exception of the Premier's Awards. A search of the Premier's web site was conducted at the time of the study (<http://www.premier.wa.gov.au/>). The Premier's vision statement for Western Australia had all the makings of supporting innovation within the WASPS, as follows:

*'My Government has a clear vision for our State - to make Western Australia a better place to live. That means delivering better services; providing new jobs; protecting our unique lifestyle; and supporting regional development. The centrepiece of our second-term agenda is to provide the best education and training system in Australia. WA is leading the nation in economic activity and has unlimited possibilities. My Government will work to harness those opportunities and deliver a better future for Western Australia' (<http://www.premier.wa.gov.au/>).*

However, there was little substantiated evidence in the study to support the adoption of innovation from a more strategic view. Further, the only recent reference to be found related to innovation was a statement launching the Government's innovation initiative, (<http://www.wa.alp.org.au/media/0504/20002286.html>). This document adopted a narrow approach to innovation referring to the desire to see the growth of knowledge based industries driven by

*'scientific, engineering and technological advances'*

and stating that

*'the innovation that has occurred in resource exploration, engineering, processing and manufacturing, would underpin WA's continuing performance as Australia's leading State economy' (page unknown).*

The findings of the study indicated that innovation within the WASPS could be enhanced, despite, or in spite of political leadership. This view is supported by Borins (2002) who concluded that a substantial proportion of innovative efforts within the public sectors of United States and Canadian public sectors were due to bottom-up rather than politically led innovation.

However, for the Premier's vision, outlined above, to be achieved in full and to ensure a bright future for the State, it is essential that Political leadership further enhance and support innovative efforts made by public sector employees. The relationship between the Premier, his/her political leaders and the 'bureaucracy', the employees of the sector, is crucial in this achievement. Borins (2002) succinctly writes about the importance of this relationship and political leadership, as follows:

*'If the political leadership has a better relationship with the bureaucracy, it will encourage bottom-up innovation and make the bureaucracy a partner in both crisis response and agency turnarounds... The public good requires a bureaucracy that is loyal and professional, and that can be a willing and capable partner in innovation' (p 474).*

The findings of this study clearly indicate a need for more effective political leadership of innovation by the Premier, Ministers and the current Government. The findings indicated that this is vital because of the changing nature of the community and increasing public demands on the public sector. This need, however, cannot be left to chance and needs a clearly articulate policy and strategy aimed at capturing a broad innovation agenda for the public sector. The strategies chosen and advocated in the 'emergent model' need to consider all structural, cultural and human resource factors that have emerged from the findings of this study.

## **The Emergent Model: Enhancement of Innovation in the WASPS**

The research findings have been discussed in depth in the previous chapter and in the discussion preceding this. A key research question for the study focuses on the enhancement of innovation within the WASPS. It is proposed that innovation can be enhanced by adopting a more strategic view of innovation. The 'emergent model' supports this perspective. The 'emergent model' is built on the perceptions of Leaders, Experts and Influencers and is augmented with contemporary literature on innovation. The following section links the themes discussed and presents and explains the core components of the 'emergent model'.

### ***A Strategic Approach to Innovation***

The adoption of a more strategic approach to innovation is paramount for the WASPS to achieve a greater degree of innovation. Inherent in the findings was the need for the sector to be systematic in its approach with a clear set of objectives for innovation. The findings also point to the fact that, in order to adopt a strategic approach, it will be necessary for the WASPS to acknowledge two things; firstly, that the current state of innovation within the WASPS is problematic, and secondly that there is a need for consensus about the importance of innovation for the sector. Both of these acknowledgements are necessary in order to establish the strategic relevance of innovation for the whole sector and support the view that for any organisational change to occur, employees need first to be aware of the need to change, and secondly to accept that change is necessary before positive change initiatives can be actioned.

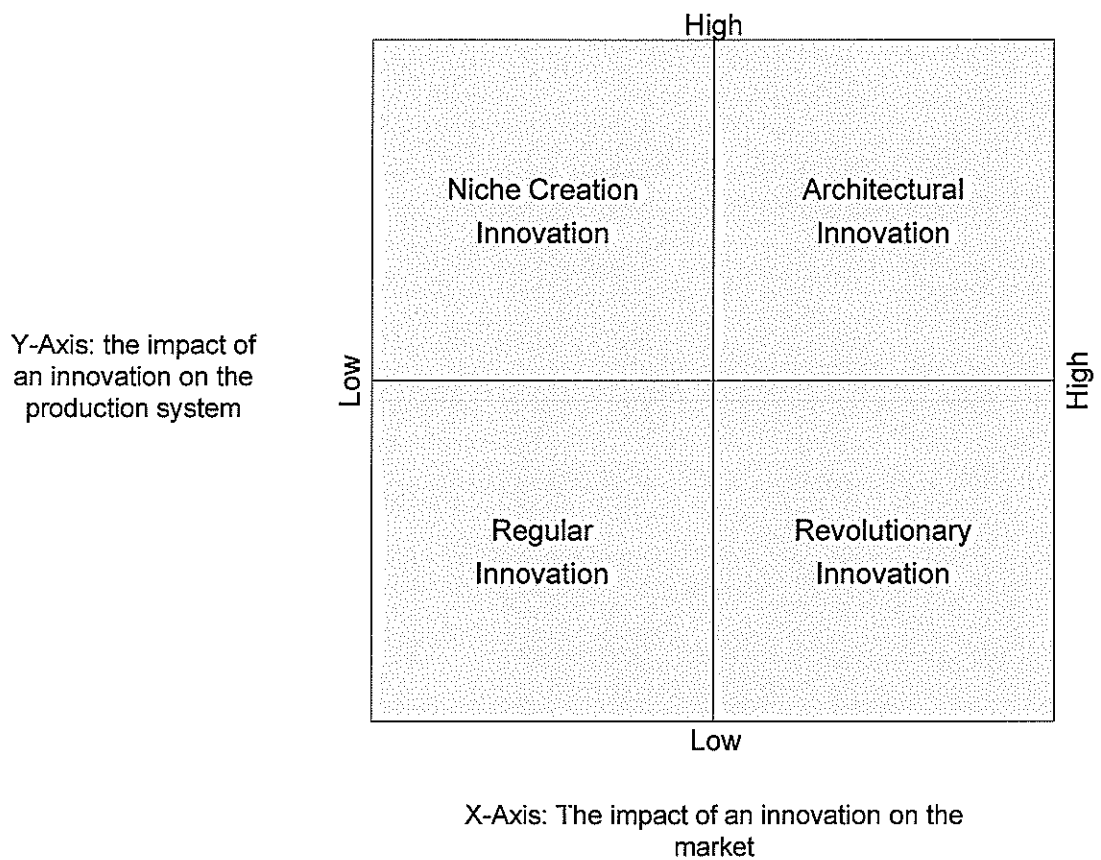


The current state of innovation highlights the WASPS's inadequacy in achieving an innovative public sector. As previously discussed, the findings overall indicate that the current state problematic, the culture risk averse, with a lack of leadership for innovation evident. While recognising that the current state of innovation in the WASPS is problematic, themes emerged that identified enablers of innovation and offered suggestions for rectifying the problematic state of innovation seen in the WASPS.

There have been a number of attempts to classify innovations based on their source, users and outcomes (Abernathy, 1983; Burns and Stalker, 1961) which may be of use in supporting and explaining the findings. A classification outlined by Osborne and Brown (2005), advocates that the

*'different relationships possible between the impact of an innovation upon the production of goods and services of an organisation, and upon its impact upon its actual and potential users and beneficiaries'(p 126)*

be considered. In this classification the present state of innovation in the WASPS included in the findings, would clearly fit in the 'regular' innovation quadrant, as shown in figure 15 below. The type of innovation described by participants focused around refining existing production processes and services in an incremental way. The findings suggest that the ideal position for innovation for the public sector would be for a movement towards the 'architectural' innovation quadrant with high impact on the product/service and the market.



**Figure 15: Classification of Innovation (Osborne and Brown, 2005, P 126)**

This study highlights the vital importance of innovation for WASPS. This perception of importance was shared by both Leaders and Experts and Influencers, who stressed the importance of a more strategic view of innovation.

There was substantial support from the literature on this point. There is a recognition that a paradox exists with the public sector's adherence to rules, maintenance of established routines, due process and accountability, with the need to be innovative in order to respond to the changing circumstances and needs of the public. Despite this the literature clearly articulates the importance of innovation within a vibrant public sector (Goodsell, 1993; Altshuler and Behn, 1997). Drucker (1994) sees innovation as part of the process of making the future, and that those companies which fail to innovate will suddenly find that they have 'lost their way'. It is well recognised that innovation is one of the most vitally important capabilities that any organisation in today's economy can have (Hamel, 2000; Hargadon and Sutton, 2000; Caudron, 1999).

### **Consideration of the Context of the WASPS**

An integral component of adopting a strategic approach to innovation is the consideration of the context of the WASPS. The 'emergent model' considers 'context' to be all encompassing including factors such as the consideration of the 'current state' and consensus about the importance of innovation already outlined, but also to include:

- political considerations,
- financial and economic factors,
- societal and community influencers,
- technological issues,
- workforce issues,
- global forces, and
- environmental factors.

In the document 'Better Planning: Better Services' (Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2003), the context of Western Australia is described in relation to building on Western Australia's strengths. These include

*'our natural endowments, proximity to rapidly growing markets, stable and efficient political, legal and financial institutions, an educated, skilled and healthy workforce, a tradition of global focus and openness to new ideas, good social and economic infrastructure and a high quality of life' (p 3).*

While this description of context is indeed valid, consideration of the context in terms of innovation needs to include political will and priorities, technological influences, community expectations, and a broad range of economic factors. These factors are dynamic and ever changing and the 'emergent model' recognises these factors as an important dimension necessary for enhancing innovation in the WASPS.

### **Establishing a Vision for the WASPS**

Tied closely to the context and part of the strategic approach to innovation is the need for a clearly articulated vision. The most recent vision detailed by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (2003) provides substantial support for enhanced innovation within the sector:

*'Western Australia will be a creative, sustainable and economically successful State that embraces its multicultural heritage and its rich natural resources. It will provide the best opportunities for current and future generations to live better, longer and healthier lives' (p 4).*

Most participants in the study were not fully aware of this vision or understood how it provided an umbrella vision for agencies within the WASPS. There is much evidence to support the proposition that a vision that is clearly owned and understood by all is a fundamental determinant of innovation (Kanter, 1988). The findings indicate that the Department of Premier and Cabinet of the WASPS needs to provide leadership in producing a vision that is negotiated and shared by all public sector employees. This vision needs to provide motivation for the enhancement of innovation within the sector. The need for a clear vision is included as a 'first phase' component of the 'emergent model'.

## **Identifying Key Strategic Priorities Areas For Innovation**

In any strategic approach, an organisation needs to set clear strategic priorities and result areas, which subsequently guide an action or operational plan. While the language in various planning models varies, and terms used interchangeably, the intention remains the same, that key strategic priorities areas are identified to provide direction for decisions within agencies and form the criteria against which achievements can be measured.

The findings indicated that the identification of key strategic priorities and result areas for innovation for the WASPS can be guided by the goals identified in the 'Strategic Planning Framework for the Western Australian Public Sector (Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2003). The goals identified are an attempt to provide an integrative framework to strategic planning and decision making for the WASPS. It is important to note that although this was seen as an opportunity for identifying goals, there appeared to be little ownership and awareness of these goals by participants in the study. Articulating and owning these goals will increase the likelihood of WASPS adopting a strategic approach to innovation and focus its innovation efforts on people and communities, the economy, the environment, the regions, and the sector's governance.

The first component of the 'emergent model', that of adopting a strategic approach to enhance innovation, can therefore be presented below. To summarise, the initial dimensions of the model include:

- consideration of the context of the WASPS
- establishing a vision for the WASPS
- Identifying key strategic priority areas of innovation.

### The Emergent Model: A Strategic Approach

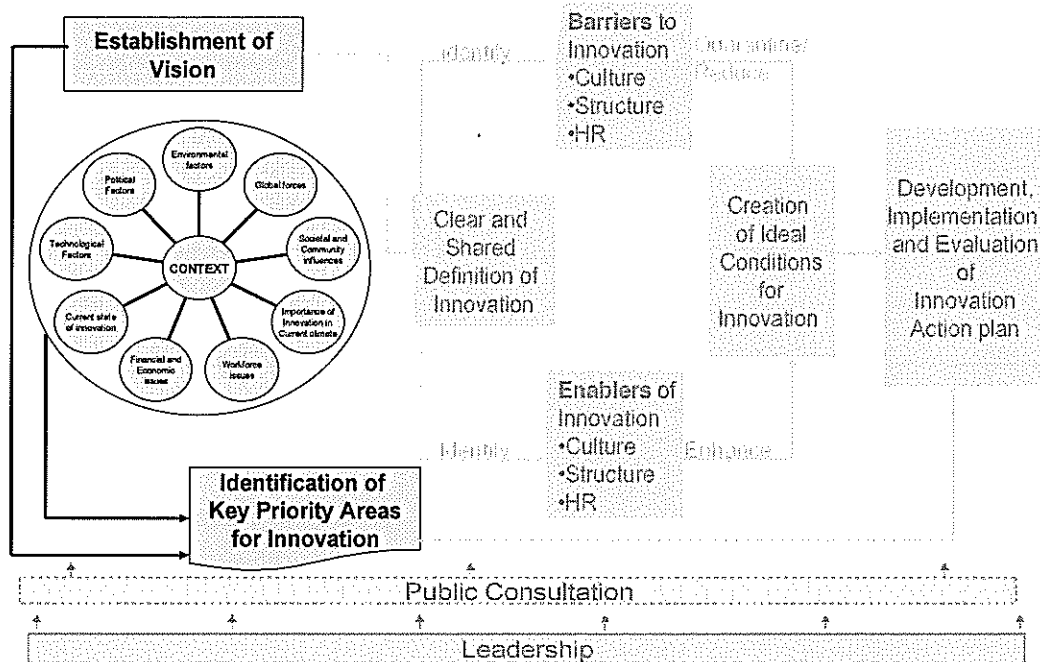


Figure 16: Emergent Model - A Strategic Approach

### Adoption of a Clear and Shared Definition of Innovation

The findings highlight the need for an agreed definition that gives shared meaning to innovation within the WASPS. Most importantly, this definition needs to take into account the context of the public sector. The 'emergent model' articulates this need by having the definition of innovation following the strategic focus dimension of the model. It implies that any definition should include a reference to the innovation being in the interest of the community of Western Australia and the greater public good. What emerged through the study was the strong perception that what was needed was a 'broad view' of innovation that goes beyond a research and development focus.

The findings clearly indicate that the definitions given by both Leaders and Experts and Influencers were in alignment with the definition of innovation adopted in the operational definitions of the study, that being that innovation is

*'an intentional process of turning opportunity into new and beneficial ideas and putting these into action'.*

The 'emergent model' suggests that an agreement about the definition of innovation is paramount. A definition that incorporates the dimensions identified in the study which could be used as a starting point for discussion is provided below:

*'WASPS Innovation: an intentional process of turning opportunity into new and beneficial ideas and putting these into action, in the interest of the wider community of Western Australia and public good'.*

The findings, indicating the need for an agreed definition of innovation, led to the inclusion of the next component of the 'emergent model', which is a 'clear and shared definition of innovation'. This would allow for the identification of barriers and enablers and subsequent action to create ideal conditions for innovation.

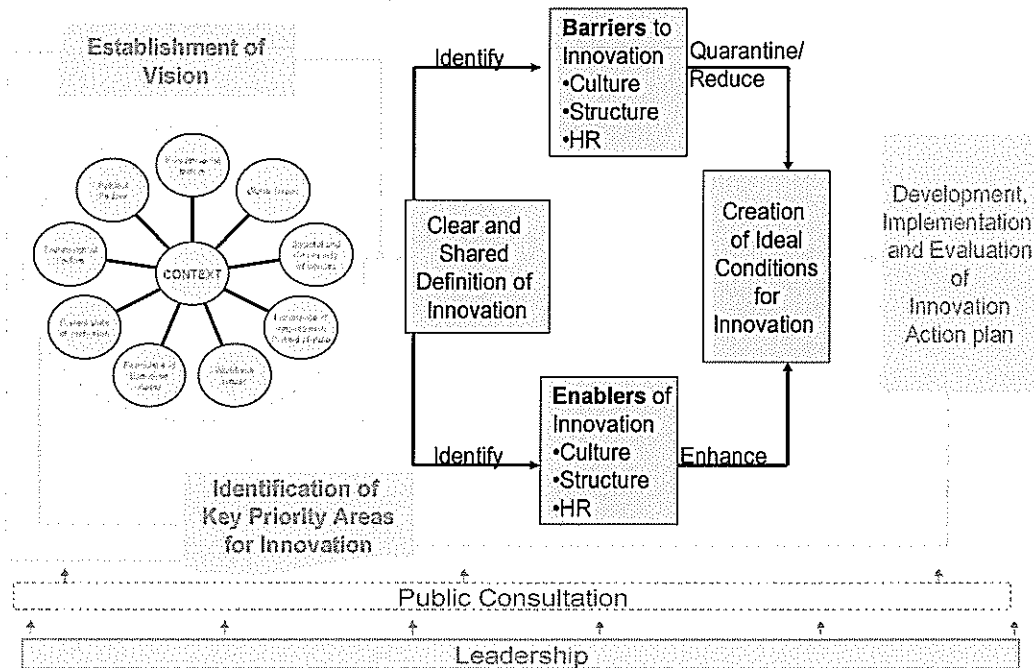
### **Creation of Ideal Conditions for Innovation**

The barriers and enablers to innovation in the WASPS were clearly identified in the study and participants agreed that barriers to innovation are extensive. These barriers would need to be reduced, removed or quarantined in order to minimise their negative influence on innovation currently experienced in the WASPS. Similarly, the enablers to innovation within the WASPS have been clearly articulated and the findings indicated that there was a need to intensify and potentiate the enablers identified throughout this research.



Consideration of the enablers and barriers identified in the previous chapter would allow the creation of conditions necessary for innovation. The link between a clear and shared definition, barriers to innovation, enablers of innovation and the creation of ideal conditions for innovation is represented as part of the 'emergent model', and highlighted in figure 17.

**The Emergent Model: A Strategic Approach**



**Figure 17: Emergent Model - Shared Vision and Ideal Conditions**

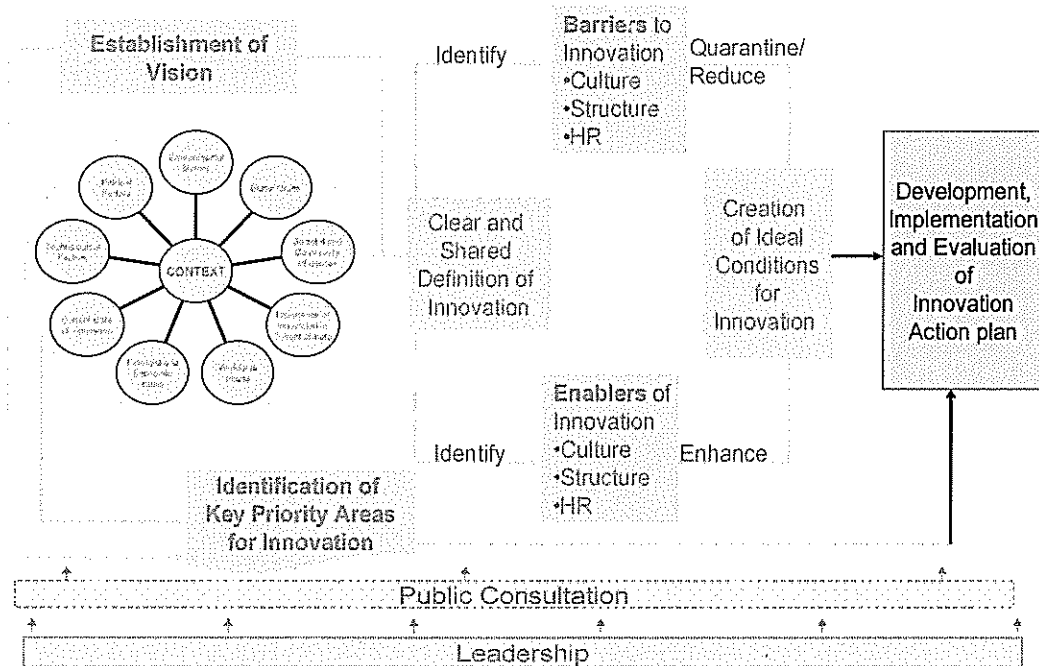
**Development, Implementation and Evaluation of an Innovation Action Plan**

The next important dimension included in the 'emergent model' is the development, implementation and evaluation of an innovation action plan. While the 'how to' in the development of an operational plan for innovation is beyond the scope of this study, it is vital that this is clearly articulated and situated as an important dimension in enhancing innovation within the WASPS.

Further, this action plan must include the important component of evaluation. Evaluation was one of the two additional dimensions emerging from the findings that impact on innovation in the WASPS. Evaluation is an important component for any strategic approach and is inherently important following the development and implementation of an innovation action plan. Possible evaluation methodologies for innovation could include a combination of monitoring, surveys, comparative – before and after studies, peer review and surveying. It should be recognised that evaluation of any activity is influenced by the choice of methodology and its usefulness for decision makers. This is an area that future researchers might focus on.

The 'Development, Implementation and Evaluation of an Innovative Action Plan' component of the 'emergent model' is highlighted in figure 18.

**The Emergent Model: A Strategic Approach**



**Figure 18: Emergent Model: Innovation Action Plan**

## **Public Consultation**

The second additional dimension that emerged from the findings and identified in the 'emergent model' is public consultation. Public consultation is seen as encompassing all phases of the model from the consideration of the context, establishment of a vision and agreed definition of innovation and the identification of key strategic priorities areas.

The benefits of public consultation are well documented and it is also recognised that Governments seem to be shy about subjecting their actions, decisions and expenditure to public scrutiny (Sinclair, 2002) by the citizens whose interests they are supposed to serve (Buckley, 2001). Waugh and Waugh (2004) discuss the importance of public consultation and state that

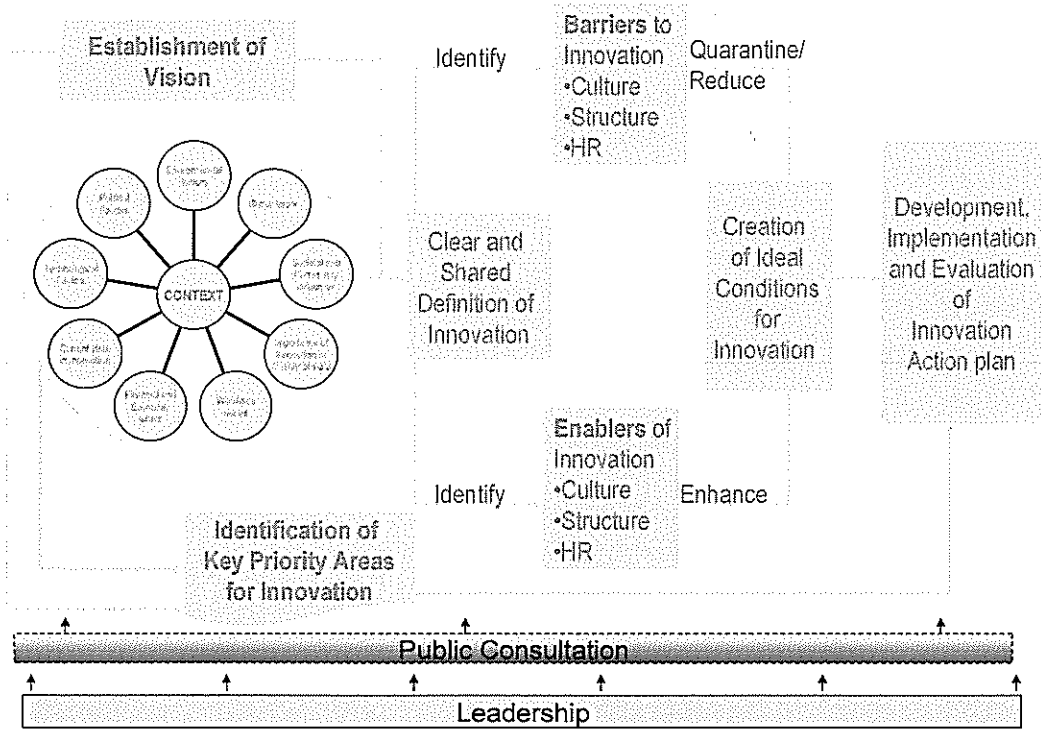
*'public officials are part of that public and, thus, have a responsibility to deal with them as fellow citizens rather than as customers or clients' (p 406).*

Further research about this important aspect of public service is also a recommendation made in this study.

## **Leadership**

In many ways this study is as much a study of leadership, as it is of innovation as the importance of effective leadership of innovation pervaded every aspect of the findings. There is clear recognition in the literature discussed previously of the link between leadership and successful innovation (Parry and Proctor-Thomson, 2003; Kotter, 1998). Valle (in Parry and Proctor-Thompson, 2003) writes that this point is of particular concern for the public sector, proposing that the changing nature of public service requires a different form of leadership which must promote flexibility and adaptability in organisations and in individuals. The literature supports the findings that public sector leadership, to be effective, must involve clear vision, effective communication, and inspired motivation towards organisational goals. The importance of leadership in enhancing innovation needs recognition and as such it is proposed that leadership impacts on and drives every aspect of the 'emergent model' indicated in figure 19.

**The Emergent Model: A Strategic Approach**



**Figure 19: Emergent Model - Public Consultation and Leadership**

## Summary

The reality facing the Western Australian State Public Sector is that with the constantly changing state of Western Australia, the sector must create innovative products and services to better meet the needs of the community of Western Australia's, now and in the future. Innovation can help achieve this goal and ensure that the WASPS can provide excellent services, in terms of quality and quantity, which are delivered in a timely manner, at a cost the community can afford.

It is apparent from this study that, while there are pockets of innovation within the WASPS, there is an overall need to enhance the capacity for innovation. The 'emergent model' provides a framework that can provide an enhanced capacity for innovation in the WASPS. This can be achieved by reducing the cultural, structural and human resource barriers that exist and by simultaneously enhancing the enablers that were identified in this study. The 'emergent model' takes a strategic view with special consideration for the context for innovation within the WASPS. Inherent in this model is the need for a clear and shared definition of innovation; the creation of ideal conditions for innovation; and the development of an innovation action plan. Superimposed on this model is the need for greater capacity for, and commitment to, meaningful public consultation. Most importantly, the study highlighted a need for strong and effective leadership throughout the Western Australia State Public Sector to enhance innovation. These linkages are fully presented in the complete 'emergent model' presented in figure 20. The 'emergent model', therefore suggests that innovation can be enhanced by adopting a strategic approach.

The concluding chapter to follow will provide a summary of the study and limitations. It will also provide recommendations for further research.

## The Emergent Model: A Strategic Approach

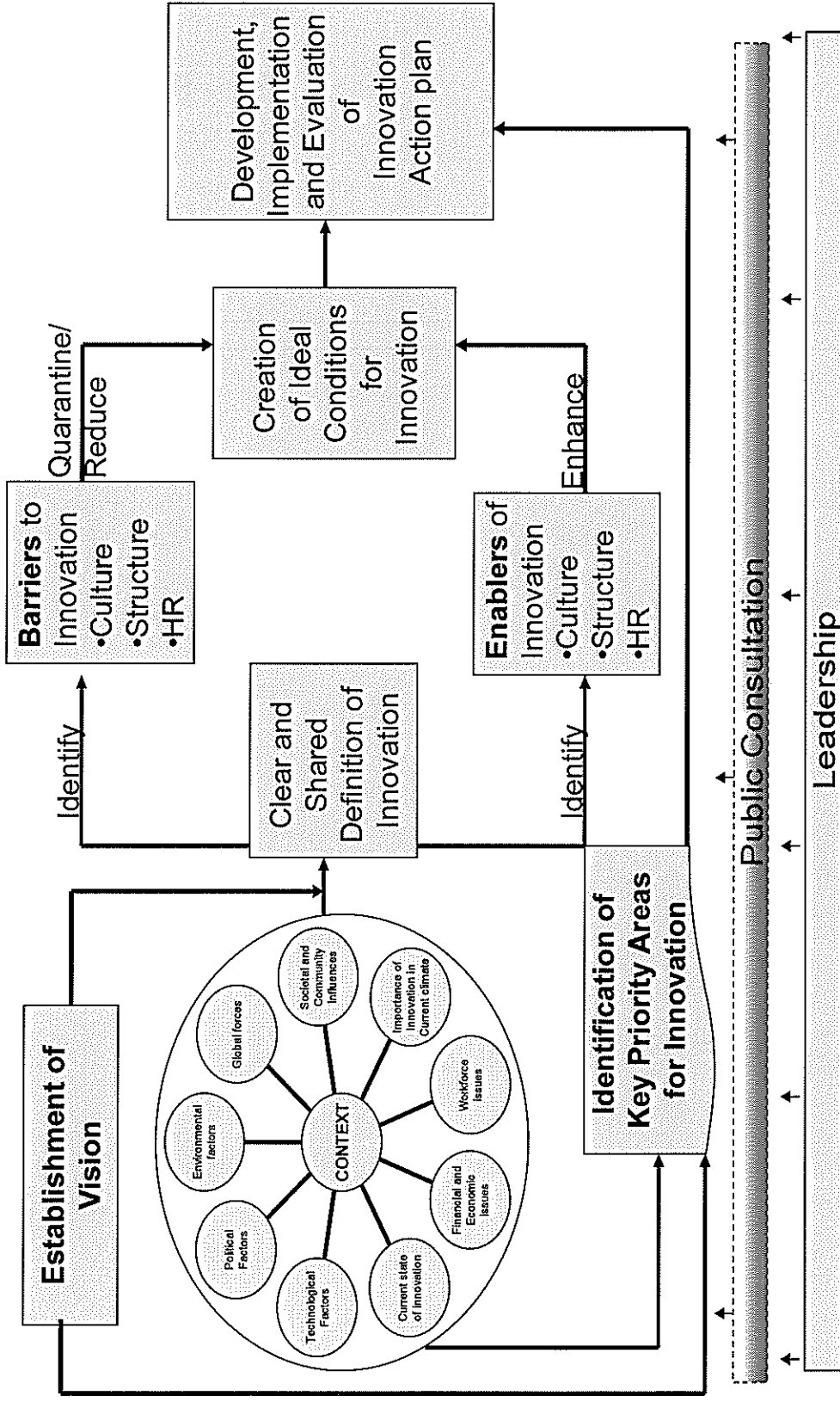


Figure 20: Emergent Model - In Full 2

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

This chapter will finalise the research by summarising the study, justifying the appropriateness of the methodological choice and reiterating the importance of the 'emergent model' in enhancing innovation in the WASPS. In addition, this chapter will outline the limitations of the study and make recommendations about future research in the area of public sector innovation.

### ***The Study***

This research sought to gain a deeper understanding of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector by exploring the perceptions of innovation, the enablers and barriers and examples of innovation in the sector amongst Leaders, Experts and Influencers. In addition the research also aimed to determine ways in which innovation can be enhanced in the sector.

The context of this research is the Western Australia State Public Sector (WASPS) and the study is significant because there is currently little exploration and description of the perceptions of innovation in the Public Sector of Australia and a lack of common understanding of innovation in the WASPS.

This study adopts a qualitative methodology to explore the meaning given by Leaders, Experts and Influencers of the WASPS and their perceptions of innovation in that sector. The qualitative paradigm provides rich meaning to the research questions for the study which are:

- 1. What are the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst Leaders?*
- 2. What are the perceptions of innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector amongst Experts and Influencers?*



3. *What are the barriers and enablers to innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector*
4. *How can innovation in the Western Australian State Public Sector be enhanced?*

A phenomenological approach is adopted for the study which allows the structure and essence of the phenomena of innovation within the public sector to be explored. Data was collected using semi structured, in-depth interviews and data analysis using a phenomenological approach was conducted. This ensured that the experience and meaning of the phenomena of innovation is described and explained as faithfully as possible.

### ***The Emergent Model***

The key findings of the study indicate that while there are pockets of innovation within the WASPS there is an overall need to enhance the capacity for innovation. An 'emergent model' is proposed which provides a framework to enhance the capacity for innovation in the WASPS. The 'emergent model' highlights the need for a strategic view with special consideration of the context for innovation within the WASPS and the need for strong and effective leadership throughout the Western Australia State Public Sector to enhance innovation. The 'emergent model', summarised below, offers the sector great potential to produce a vibrant and responsive public sector, well equipped to meet the needs of the Western Australian community now and in years to come through innovation.

# The Emergent Model: A Strategic Approach

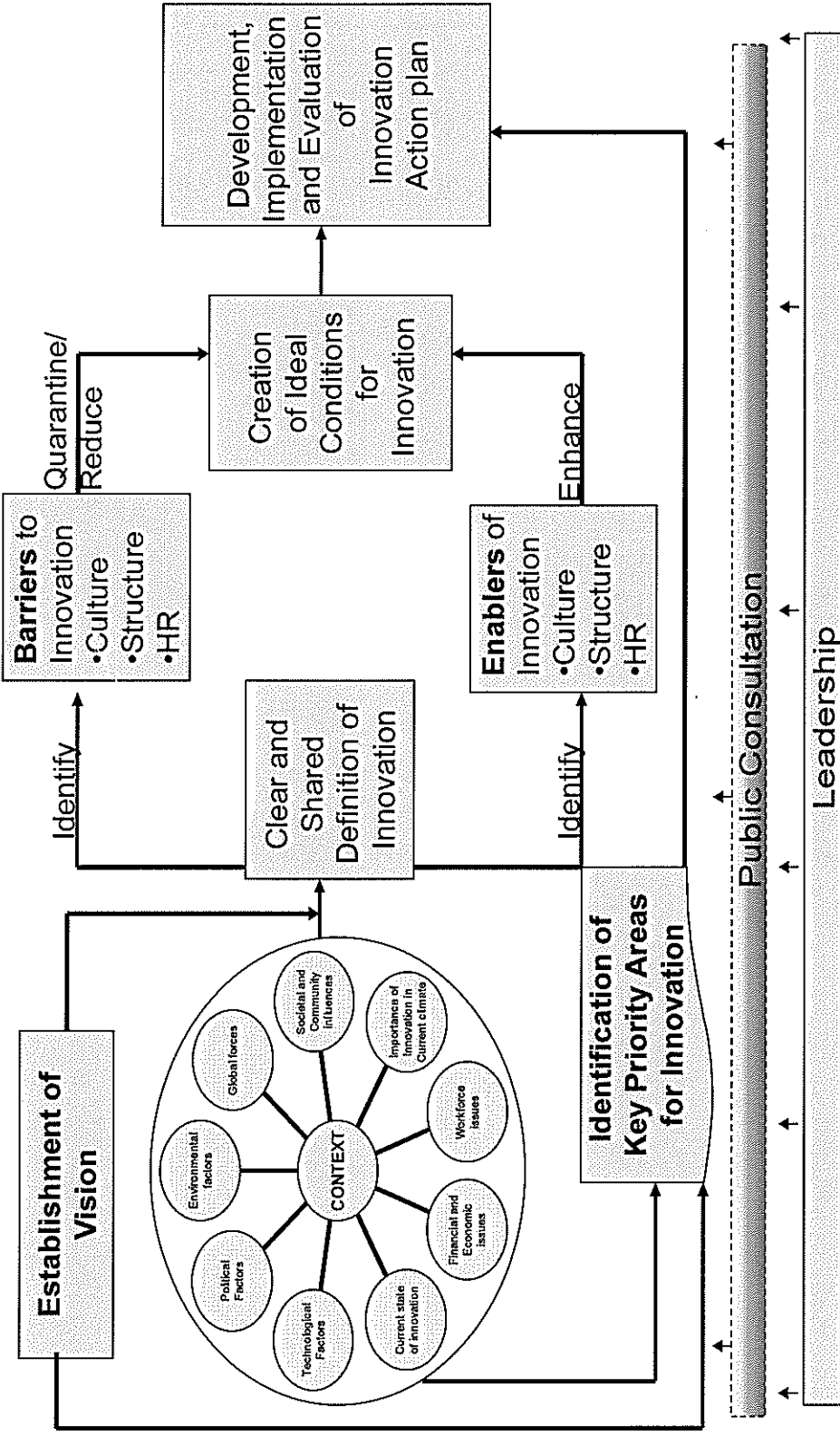


Figure 21: Emergent Model – Conclusion

### ***Limitations of the Study***

This study is specifically a study of the state public sector of Western Australia. The qualitative research methodology used in this study is predicated on contextuality, and as such the findings may not apply to other public sector situations without generalisation. However should other researchers find themselves in a research context that closely resembles the WASPS organisationally, then the study may be transferable. Lincoln and Guba (1989) point out that the onus is on other researchers to judge how closely the context matches and assess whether the differences are likely to affect the recommendations made in the original research.

### ***Recommendations for Further Research***

This study has opened the possibility of more extensive research of the public sector specific to innovation. In a general sense, it was apparent during the study that much research had been conducted by Doctoral and Masters level students from a number of Universities on a wide variety of topics in the WASPS. Whilst some of the research was recalled by participants there was no central data base of research conducted within the sector. Further, there was no sense of any application of this considerable research. A meta-analysis of all recent research conducted about the WASPS is therefore recommended.

More specifically to innovation, the relationship between political and public sector leadership, and the effect of this relationship on innovation warrants further exploration. This recommendation is supported by the findings of this study which showed the significant influence of leadership and this relationship on innovation.

During this study examples of innovation were given, and presented anonymously in the findings. Further analysis of these examples and a more detailed description of the cases of innovation would be recommended. In particular if this analysis was conducted without anonymity, the research could better inform the type of agency in which innovation is successful and an analysis of the leadership factors that influence successful innovation. Along with this recommendation, the author would advocate for an analysis of cases of innovation detailed in the Premier's awards. Using both a qualitative and quantitative approach, this analysis might replicate the approach used by Borins (2000) in which he analysed the qualities of innovators within the public sector.

As previously discussed, the need for effective evaluation of innovation, as well as genuine public consultation, is crucial to innovation in the WASPS, but fell out of the scope of this study. Further research in this area would enhance the understanding of these important components for successful innovation. The findings of this study have also detailed the ability of leaders to create an environment to enhance innovation within the sector. There is scope therefore to undertake research about the recruitment criteria and practices of the WASPS and whether the qualities of appointed leaders enhance innovation.

Resourcing surfaced as an important dimension for innovation. Resourcing limitations within the WASPS were seen as a stimulus for finding innovative solutions to resource limitation. The provision of additional funding, as well as the flexibility to re-allocate funding within an allocated budget, was thought to be an innovation enhancer. As there were several perspectives about the effect of resource allocation on innovation, this issue lends itself to further exploration and thus also forms a recommendation for further research.

## **Summary**

It is hoped that this study makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in the area of innovation in the public sector. Enhanced innovation is an achievable goal, with great potential to contribute to a vibrant and responsive public sector, well equipped to meet the needs of the Western Australian community now and in years to come.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix One: Letter to Participants*

Note: letter was sent on Curtin University letterhead with a slightly amended letter sent to 'Experts and Influencers'

Sue van Leeuwen  
DBA Student  
Graduate School of Business  
Curtin University of Technology  
78 Murray Street  
Perth. WA. 6000

Mobile:  
Email:

Date

Participants Details

Dear

I am writing to seek your participation in a research project which will explore innovation in the public sector. This research project will be conducted by me as part of my Doctoral studies at Curtin University. Senior leaders in the public sector will be interviewed to explore their perceptions of innovation and to identify barriers and enablers to innovation. My study will also identify innovation in the public sector and will formulate strategies to enhance innovation.

This study will adopt a broad definition of innovation and use a qualitative research process, through interviews and focus groups. Senior leaders within the public sector have been chosen as the sample to ensure that the description of innovation is rich and meaningful.

If you agree to participate in this study, I would ask to interview you, for about an hour, on the subject of innovation. The findings of this project will be given back to yourself as a participant.

Please be reassured that my research has been approved by Curtin University's research and ethics committees. The conduct of my research will be supervised by two highly experienced academics from Curtin University, who are happy to be contacted at any time throughout the study. Their contact details are as follows:

(Supervisor details)

I will contact you in the near future to discuss the possibilities of participating in the project. I have attached a participation agreement for your perusal.

Yours sincerely

Sue van Leeuwen

Enclosed:  
Participation Agreement



**Participation Agreement for Research Project  
By  
Sue van Leeuwen, Doctoral Student,  
Graduate School of Business  
Curtin University**

**A Study of Innovation in the Public Sector**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. The research is being conducted as part of a doctoral program in the Graduate School of Business at Curtin University of Technology. The aim of this research is to study innovation in the public sector.

As part of this research, you will be interviewed about your perceptions of innovation in the public sector. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may terminate your participation in the study at any time.

The interview will be recorded on audiotape, and the tape will be transcribed verbatim into a document file. This file will then be analysed with the assistance of qualitative data management software. When the interview is transcribed, all names will be omitted and the file will be identified by a number only.

The content of the interview will remain confidential to the researcher, Sue van Leeuwen, and the results of the research will be reported in general terms only. Any direct quotes from interviewees used in the thesis will not be identified by name, either by person or by agency in which they are employed.

At the completion of the research, the tapes will be destroyed. The transcripts of the interviews will be retained in an electronic format at the Graduate School of Business, at Curtin University of Technology for five years. This research complies with guidelines set by Curtin University, including compliance to the National Health and Medical Research Council's Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.