Beyond Fragmented Government:

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here to our second conference on governance in the public Sector.

I especially wish to thank our sponsor: The Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Members of the Organising Committee, the CICGR officers: Xinting Jia, Vicky Totikidis and Doris Aihara who organised the conference, and the keynote speakers and authors of the refereed papers.

I especially welcome our academic contributors from GovNet: from Monash and Griffith Universities, and those who have traveled from overseas.

We are all familiar with the definitions of governance in our test books. It generally refers to the processes by which organisations are directed, controlled and held to account. The Australian Auditor General states that it encompasses authority, accountability, stewardship, leadership, direction and control exercised in organisations, a list to which the Victorian Auditor General at our last conference added risk management.

These elements describe the structures and processes that underlie the various guidelines for best practice in governance. Those of us who study governance are also aware that each discipline, law, management, finance and economics to name a few, offers its own body of knowledge that endeavors to provide a theoretical basis for understanding the processes of good governance.

Governance is not new. History shows that the present forms of governance evolved from the emergence of companies in the 19th Century. These were not private companies but the government owned enterprises such as the East India Company or the Hudson’s Bay Company operating in Canada that owned exclusive rights to commercial activity in those countries.

How times have changed! The wheel has turned from those times of exclusive government ownership, through a slow growth in the respectability, and acceptance of private enterprises and later company law, to today where massive changes in our society are once again demanding changes in governance in the public sector.

But, does government have to change?

History has shown that human endeavor exhibits continuity even as it radically changes over the centuries. Values such as honesty, integrity, transparency and
fairness – issues we are addressing today – and that are enshrined in every code of ethics - remain constant.

Nevertheless, change in our times has been marked by the emergence of technological advances in ICT, a new migration of human populations across the face of the planet, the rise of terrorism, and a growing rejection of inequality in living standards and opportunities.

Governments’ responses around the world have been a plethora of reforms that have raised new issues about the fragmentation of government and the ability of governments to maintain a civil society. In keeping with this conference are questions about what new governance structures are emerging, how will governments maintain and renew the trust of their constituencies and what models of governance are appropriate if the institutions of society are to operate across global boundaries.

What challenges these issues raise for government officers and politicians, and academics!

And how can we respond? How are we to think intelligently about change and move forward boldly and wisely to meet the challenges? Indeed, are changes in governance one of the answers?

According to the OECD 2001 it is:

“Improving governance- the way society collectively solves its problems and meets its needs- is at the core of government strategies to reconcile economic prosperity, social cohesion and environmental progress”.

You, who are here today, have the intelligence and ability to influence and shape the government strategies that will determine our future.

Take advantage of these 3 days in the conference to gather information, and to transform it into knowledge. It is up to you to meet others, exchange views, and to think deeply about ideas, and, finally, to grow in wisdom.

I wish you a most rewarding and enjoyable conference.

Professor Anona Armstrong
Convener