

Swimming against the tide: the importance of quality implementation for reform agendas in a resistant culture

In response to the growth and escalating costs of regulation, the Australian Government made election commitments focused on reducing the regulatory burden on individuals, community organisations and business by \$1 billion annually. All agencies are required to meet an annual target for reducing the costs of regulation – which includes both formal regulation and red tape – and offset all new regulation with attendant regulatory reductions.

Key principles of the Government's agenda are that regulation should only be imposed where absolutely necessary; inefficient regulation should be eliminated; and, the cost of new regulation should be offset by cost reductions. Meeting these requirements and targets necessitates significant shifts in how we do our business in Government – in particular, a move away from regulation as the default method of managing policy and programme risks, towards lower or more proportional regulatory options that still ensure risk and vulnerability are managed.

Two speakers from the Deregulation Unit of the Department of Social services will discuss the challenges in implementing such a far-reaching and radical agenda. In particular, the focus will be on the role and place of regulation, and its significance to policy developers and programme managers in the agency – both as a protection mechanism for vulnerable people as well as a driver of market maturity and well implemented evidence based services through rewarding good behaviour.

The focus will also be on the structural and cultural shifts required to give effect to this agenda. These are essential components for driving quality implementation and include:

- o how working collaboratively with key areas of government can shift ideas about regulation and unearth the way regulation impedes access and can work against the interests of vulnerable people
- o the important place of structural supports and strong governance mechanisms in driving and achieving effective implementation
- o how the 'offer' to areas of the department must be seen as a value-add in order to shift practice and change culture
- o the need for strong cross-government relationships to achieve quality implementation of a whole-of-government agenda at the local level
- o why staff development and training for the change team are critical to changing the overall staff culture in relation to a reform endeavour.

Janet Stodulka and Ros Baxter have over 40 years combined experience in policy and programme roles at local, state and federal government between them. They share a passion for getting things done and ensuring staff understand and are able to co-design reform work. Most recently, they have shared the role of managing the Deregulation Unit at the Department of Social Services.