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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Co-production is considered an essential element in the successful design and delivery of contemporary public services globally because it is thought to offer opportunities for users to gain empowerment. In a context of increased calls for innovation, it seems likely that there would be a relationship between the capacity of an organisation to co-produce and the levels of innovation it creates. Within the co-production literature, service design, service implementation and service delivery are sometimes all bundled together under the practice of co-production. Although co-production - defined as the engagement of users in improving the delivery of public services - can be used in different phases, in this purpose we focus on its application in developing innovative ways to implement policy and provide services.

Our review of the academic and practitioner literature reveals that, at its core, co-production is a process that is entered into collaboratively, but how this is constituted depends on a number of factors. It depends on the level the co-production is involved in to enable service delivery, and whether implementation is grounded in management, service or systems theory. The reality is that too often many of those who use this concept fail to distinguish such factors, or to articulate the assumptions and mental models their research or practice is based on.

In the paper we outline three alternative theoretical perspectives of co-production. First, a public administration approach where the focus is upon the creation of the ideal service design and delivery by experts. Second is an approach which considers the delivery of public services as “services” to be delivered **with** the user within a service management system, rather than “manufactured goods” delivered **to** them; the contextual impact from the system is recognised, meaning that there is no one best way of delivering services. The third approach is the systems approach where the focus shifts from participation in a single service to value gained from interactions across the system as a whole. Each individual organisational “system” exists within a complex public service system where interactions between citizens or service users are dynamic; each participant has a personal pathway through the system influenced by their individual lived experiences, which enables them to make sense of their world and disturbs the interactions of others. It is these interactions between multiple stakeholders that can give rise to the emergent properties, or unexpected outcomes, within the system that facilitate evolution and innovation. Thus, for innovation to be really supported there needs to be a service integration approach to co-production where the user is central to the service design and delivery.

From this we suggest that the way that this changes the roles of the different actors in the co-production system has three implications:

- 1.

3. The focus of how to create and sustain innovation moves away from stand-alone innovation processes, towards using service integrated co-production as the mechanism that will enable innovation to emerge. We submit that when there is the call for collaboration to enable innovation, what is needed, in fact, is the development of service integrated co-production. If this way of working is embedded into government systems and structures, ongoing calls for transparency, accountability, agility and innovation would, inevitably, have to be addressed.

As a result of our analysis we suggest that the way forward for both academics and practitioners is to consider some new questions. Is the service integrated systems model with its claims of innovation and long-term cost saving legitimate? What is the social impact of user centred co-production when the system includes the third sector? What is the evidence of the success of co-production as an innovation tool, and how can it be evaluated within the Australian context? Does understanding that there are different forms of co-production help clarify the wide range of potential uses that range from a relationship for enduring and voluntary outcomes (such as school participation) to the mundane and at times involuntary or compulsory activities with immediate outcomes (completing a tax return)? What is the role of information technology and social media in co-production?

To answer these new questions we call for more diversity in research approaches. The research to date has concentrated on using case studies to explore and explain co-production. A lack of contextual clarity makes it almost impossible to compare or contrast existing studies. To begin to identify sound principles and practices for co-production that can be used to support innovation and transferred to other situations, we advocate researchers choose a wider range of methodologies and methods to help evaluate whether co-production is delivering anticipated innovation results.

WHAT IS CO-PRODUCTION AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Co-production has long been considered as a way of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public services (Brandsen and Pestoff, 2006; Durose, Needham, Mangan and Rees, 2017; Osborne and Strokosch, 2013; Pestoff, 2006; Verschuere, Brandsen and Pestoff, 2012). It is a broad term that has a host of different promises attached to it including: being a way to enable the public to influence public policy and facilitate public service reform; personalise services to meet the needs of service users; and provide a shared value to the community (Brandsen and Pestoff, 2006; Bovaird, 2007; Durose et al., 2017; Osborne and Strokosch, 2013; Pestoff, 2006; Verschuere et al., 2012). As co-production relies upon user involvement, it acts as a conduit to build social inclusiveness and citizenship (Alford, 1998; Durose et al., 2017; Osborne and Strokosch, 2013).

To date there is no clear consensus on what the concept of co-production means (Brandsen and Honingh, 2015, p 427). The central tenet of co-production is that public service users should be able to influence what is delivered to them, how it is delivered and by whom. Outside of this there is significant flexibility in terms of how this might occur. The espoused objective is that it offers advantages to users, governments and, where appropriate, third party providers, as it empowers users and enables them to influence public policy and service delivery in areas that immediately concern them. Such empowerment gives greater control over lives, influences who is involved and facilitates service provision innovations and improvements (Alford, 2016; Alford and Hughes, 2008; Bovaird, 2007; Brandsen and Pestoff, 2006; Linders, 2012; Productivity Commission 2017). Despite the predominantly positive hue of the co-production literature, some have disputed these claims and expressed concerns that co-production may not deliver on all of these outcomes and may, in fact, increase costs, reduce user choice and impede innovation (Gilchrist, 2017; Hughes, 2017; Productivity Commission, 2007).

Co-production is, therefore, described as a “woolly word” (Needham, 2009; Osborne, Radnor and Strokosch, 2016), where it is confusing as to what is included or excluded (Loffler, 2010). It is used to cover a wide range of activities that some consider should not be included because of the type of service, the types of contributor/s to the service, and the passive or coercive behaviour used within the service (Barker, 2010). Co-production is a concept that it is difficult to argue against and is very much a current trend in public policy and public administration contexts. A whole range of different initiatives have been labelled co-production and yet these may often not share very much in the way of common features (see Box 1 h0ID 300 Co-

Smart houses in which technological aids allow residents to carry out many functions for which they would otherwise need skilled support or home care; youth sports leagues run by volunteers according to nationally formulated codes (Bovaird, 2007).

Contract services undertaken by local community groups that are under contract to public agencies, for example, the maintenance of housing estates or cleaning of community centres (Bovaird, 2007).

Research, which included consulting with people with disabilities, thereby capturing participants' experiences of the NDIS in order to understand how the roll out was affecting users lives (Warr, Dickinson, Olney et al., 2017).

The academic literature provides a series of formal definitions, and the practitioner literature provides more pragmatic and applicable explanations. For a process that is seen as essential by public servants when discussing the design and delivery of services, particularly in times of tightening fiscal approach, this confusion can be problematic, particularly given that it requires the public service to develop skills and capabilities that are foreign to the established way of working (see Box 2 for examples).

- Are community and services users only invited to participate in co-production when it suits the public service, or are they integral to the design, implementation, delivery and innovation of the service?
- What value and/or innovation is created for community and service users through co-production?

The answers to these questions help us understand whether we are discussing these concepts from a strategic or a delivery perspective; and whether what we are discussing is grounded in management, service or systems theory. The above questions are addressed throughout this section.

Strategic Planning or Service Delivery?

Within the public administration and management framework, there is a clear separation between policy development and policy implementation (Moon, Dickinson and Blackman, 2017). This often leads to a sharp delineation between the strategic planning or the thinking and policy designing level, from the service delivery or implementation level (Stoker, 2006, p 50). This separation emerged as it was believed to deliver efficiency when complex tasks were broken down to a most basic level enabling staff to: follow procedures, be accountable for their performance, and offer equitable services. The underlying concept that consumers are only interested in demanding, consuming and evaluating the services (Radnor, Osborne, Kinder and Mutton, 2014) resulted in the public service focusing on how to add service user participation into the macro delivery level to improve individual service delivery. More recently, however, there has been a move to recognise the 'messiness' of implementation (Moon et al., 2017, p5), adopting a more systems perspective. In this framework, users are seen as key actors who shape and influence what happens to them (Hawe, Bond and Butler, 2009; Moon et al., 2017). We will show that the co-production literature is following this trend, and then explain why this matters.

Within the co-production literature the three clear stages of service design, service implementation and service delivery are sometimes all bundled together under the practice of co-production; and at other times they are separated and given clear definitions with different practices or tools to engage service users. We argue that if co-production is the engagement of users in improving the delivery of public services then it can be used in different phases; but we are particularly interested in its use for developing innovative ways to implement policy and provide services and will focus on this for the purposes of this paper.

Management Theory, Service Theory, Systems Theory and Co-production

While the research into co-production is grounded within several disciplines, including economics, political science, public administration and third sector (voluntary) research, and each of these disciplines has developed separate approaches, the most significant advances and comments are made within the public administration management, service management and systems literature.

The public administration management concept of co-production, often described as the "product dominant" approach, aims to foster user empowerment in policy implementation, through keeping the role of the "professional public servant" separated from the user who is "added on" when considered appropriate. The service management approach BT0 0 0 1 k/GS4pa-5 ()JTJEervant" separaant" separated fr2 yBDC BT10 0 0.

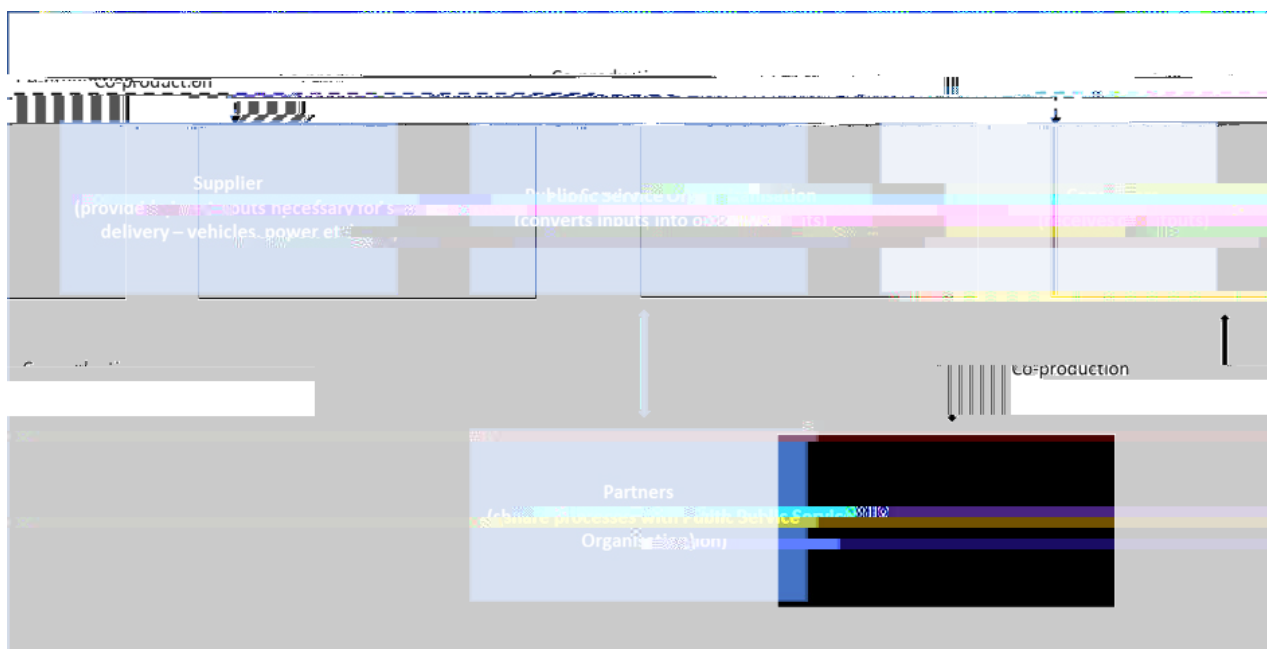
Figure 1: A Continuum of Models of Co-production (Adapted from Osborne and Strokosch, 2013, p 7)

	User Empowerment		

The product-dominant approach constantly and consistently adds the user into the process, rather than seeing them as an intrinsic and essential part of the process (Radnor et al., 2014, p 407); they only demand, consume or critique services. The role of the public servant is, therefore, the expert who provides advice to politicians to facilitate political policy; they are expected to ensure the necessary service/s are delivered according to prescribed rules, without fear or favour. In this perspective, co-production becomes about asking users what they would like, what they think of the process, and their views on what they have been given; this is done at the behest of, and under the control of, the public service.

Figure 2 illustrates the product dominant perspective of co-production. The service is co-produced by an external third party and delivered to a client user at the end of the process line. Production and consumption are separate processes and the motivations of the parties to take part are different. Co-production participants are classified according to their role in the process. The Consumer sits at the end of the process and receives services FROM the Public Service Organisation and are SECONDARY to the process. Suppliers provide inputs TO the Public Service Organisation and Partners share the work OF the Public Service Organisation and are PRIMARY to the process

Figure 2: Co-producers in different stages of the product dominant perspective of co-production (adapted from Alford, 2014, p 303)



Service providers and their partners are motivated to engage in co-production in order to raise interest and experience in the work, potentially improve the product or service, thereby increase remuneration for services provided, and gain reputation within the community for service provision expertise and excellence. Service consumers are secondary participants, primarily motivated by the provision of improved goods and fairness. Within this perspective of co-production, full-time public servants are considered to be the experts in their field, and with a clear career structure and long-term advancements based on this expertise, their knowledge and capabilities are not challenged. They are, therefore, the experts to design and facilitate the knowledge and

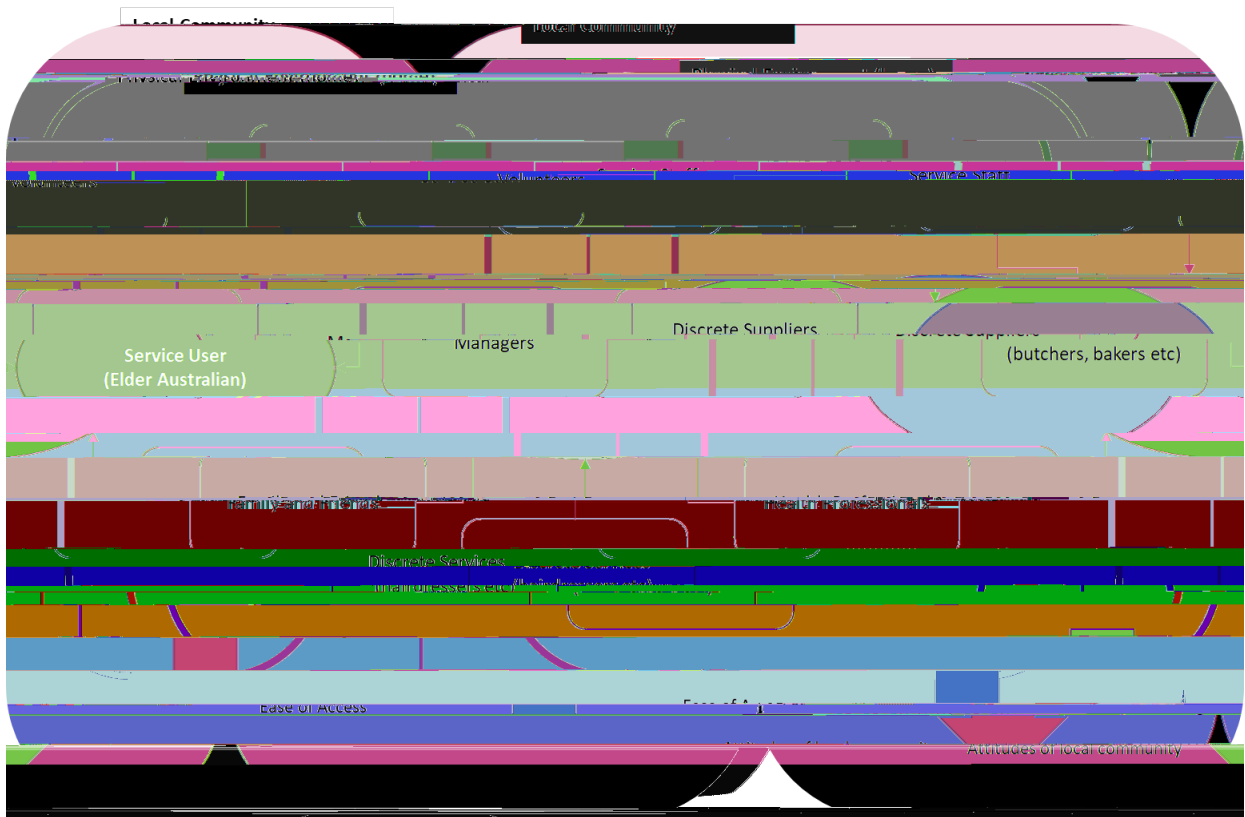
and normative reasons may elicit co-production. The unwilling and involuntary participation of service users, perhaps because their benefits may be reduced or cut if they do not participate (for example, the Job Network requires those in receipt of unemployment benefits to participate in a variety of programs or forfeit their benefits), can result in their withdrawal from co-production, resentment, perception that co-production is something unpleasant that should be avoided, and the perception that they are selfish and can't be trusted to act. Service users may also be motivated by the offer and receipt of material rewards, or non-material rewards where the service has been tailored to meet their needs, or because they identify with the procedural fairness of the service as it aligns with their moral and social positions (Alford, 2002).

Thus, any possibility of empowerment and, more importantly for this paper, innovation, is dependent on the willingness of public service experts to consult, adapt and create from the co-production processes and (b) users to take a positive part. Within this approach it is possible that the public service might consider co-production a time consuming and resource intensive approach for which users need an appetite to participate (Osborne and Stokosch, 2013). Users in turn might see the process as unrewarding, failing to deliver the changes they desired. The focus on the product, rather than the user means that both real co-production empowerment and innovation are usually limited.

Service Approach to Co-production

Over time it became clear that the product dominant approach was not creating better value for the user, or any innovation in service delivery. In fact, it was resulting in: both fragmentation and duplication of services; a lack of communication between third parties; and a loss of focus on the user.

Figure 3: Service management perspective of co-production



A Systems approach to co-production

Although co-production is intrinsic to public service delivery, and has been at the heart of sustainable public services in the 21st century, the service management logic is criticised for presenting co-production as having a linear logic that is based on the product dominant concepts of production (Osborne, 2018) and only recognises the relationships within one organisation rather than the system as a whole (Trischler and Scott, 2016). A growing recognition of the importance of understanding both policy design and implementation from a systems perspective (Head and Alford, 2013; Reynolds, Blackmore, Ison, Shah and Wedlock, 2018) has triggered interest in considering co-production as an inherent system process. As co-production is inalienable and has an involuntary aspect to it, and many systems interact within the public service framework, the systems approach shifts the focus from participation in a single service to value gained from the interactions within the system as a whole (Osborne, 2018; Osborne et al., 2016; Trischler and Scott, 2016).

Understanding that each individual organisational “system” exists within a complex public service system recognises that interactions between citizens or service users are dynamic (Osborne, 2018); each participant has a personal pathway, or series of touchpoints, through the system which is influenced by their individual lived experiences and enables the participant to make sense their world. Each individual also create disturbances in the system to be experienced by others. It is these interactions between multiple stakeholders that give rise to the emergent properties, or unexpected outcomes, within the system (Field, Victorino, Buell, Dixon et al., 2018) that facilitate evolution and innovation. This approach considers user empowerment and service innovation as core aims, which will both create, and be created by, the system interactions. In this model innovation of delivery will be emergent based upon the system elements which means that understanding who are the system actors and what are the system elements becomes very important.

The interactive relationships bring together a variety of individual lived experiences through an extensive arrangement of touchpoints into a variety of organisations delivering services within the public service system, thereby enabling transformational change in the delivery of public services (Field et al., 2018; Hodgkinson, Hannibal, Keating, Buxton, Bateman, 2017; Vargo, Maglio and Archpru Akaka, 2008). Value to users is created through their interactions within the system, nothing emerges until users actually “use” or “touch” the service, and bring with them their lived experiences and subsequent responses to the service. Therefore, value is created by the service provider, any partners they have involved and by the service user themselves. As a service cannot be “stored” in the way manufactured goods can be stored, value can only be proposed or promised by the service provider. The purpose of value is to increase the adaptability, survivability and wellbeing of the service (rather than providing wealth for the service provider). The role of the user becomes a co-production actor, creating value and innovation with the service provider.

Service Integration: Innovation and Co-production

Laitinen, Kinder and Stenvall (2015) propose an integrated service system view of co-production where value is embedded in the service and is “pulled” from the service by the service users for what they want rather than being “pushed” by the organisation. Public value is, therefore, what the public wants, rather than what the organisations believes it to be. This enhanced systems view builds on the work of Maglio



The service system “strategy and planning” provide the boundaries for the system and the “organisation and technology” embody the way of doing as service users “pull” services, while the “people’s way of working” illustrates that co-production is relational rather than transactional (Held, 2006, p 55 in Laitinen et al., 2018, p 850). The role of “learning and innovation” drives efficiency and innovation as it draws learning/s from the other variables and loops them back as innovative ideas into the context and strategy (illustrated by arrow B).

The role of middle managers and professionals becomes critical to the innovation of services within a public service system. Middle managers in the product dominant and service dominant frameworks of co-production have siloed functions and enforced boundaries. Within the service integra . 0 0og0 59/n-U8.1 d10 ions and

Figure 5: Creating innovative public value through co-production

WHO CO-PRODUCES AND WHY?

As co-production is the engagement of users in the delivery of public services, there are a number of participants in this process: the users of the service, the public servants, the service providers and those “volunteering” to the service. However, the role of these participants changes dramatically according to the theoretical framework underpinning the co-production. A summary of the participants and their role is outlined in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Who co-produces and why

		Theoretical Framework		
		Product Dominant	Service Management	Service Integration (Systems)
Participants	Service Users	Demand, use and evaluate public services. As co-production is an “add on” the role of service users is to “receive”, and this receipt may be involuntary or passive, or forced	Service Users are central to the delivery of a specific public service; therefore, may be innovating and participating in every level of design, implementation and delivery	Service Users bring their individual lived experiences when they touch integrated public services; therefore, innovate at every level of design, implementation and delivery
	Public servants	Experts in relevant service provision and engage with service users only as and when they need to. May be referred to as “professionals” as they are recognised and remunerated at a higher level than other participants. This group manages the allocation of resources to be as equal and meritorious as possible.	Public Servants are no longer considered solely as the “professionals” or the “experts”. Within this framework they are stewards of design, implementation and delivery of public services. They are still in the siloed delivery of public services with individual budgets and spans of control. “professionals”.	Public servants are participating in the innovative design, implementation and delivery of services across the public service spectrum. They may be responsible for budgets for programs delivered outside their service. They are knowledge workers, boundary spanners, innovators, and build trust relationships with a variety of participants.
	Service Providers	Delivery of public services on a contractual basis. Aiming to maximise financial reward for organisation	Service providers are involved in the innovation and co-operation with other providers to ensure the most effective delivery of services.	Service providers are innovators with service users.
	Volunteers	Volunteers are simply paid less than “professionals” to participate in the delivery of services.	Volunteers are recognised as the holders of expertise in this framework and will be remunerated accordingly.	Volunteers are part of the co-creation process who may also be learning. They are often chosen because of skills and knowledge they can bring. They can give and receive value

Whereas public servants are the key participant in a product dominant co-production process, service users are the key participants in both the service management and the service integrated systems approach to co-production as they are the central focus of the process, rather than an add-on to the process. While they may pay for this service, or they may receive it for free, the aim of the service is to meet their individual needs and provide them with an individual voice. However, there is very little evaluation of the success of this aim.

The greatest shift in role in a service integrated approach to co-production is that of the public service. No longer are they the “experts”. Their role is now that of steward ensuring an equitable distribution of resources (Verschuere et al., 2010), boundary spanner (Laitinen et al., 2018), and educator and innovator (Laitinen et al., 2018). Public servants may have significantly less expertise than the service providers and only differ from the providers and users of the service in their remuneration and the security of their

employment; in many instances, the non-public servants may, in fact, hold significantly greater expertise than the public servants. As the user of the service is the focus of the service delivery, the role of all other participants is to deliver and innovate what is needed and wanted by the service user; consequently, their roles are likely to converge.

A service integration approach to co-production requires more of middle management public servants than either of the other approaches. Their spans of control are significantly increasing from the siloed functions of the product-dominant approach, which requires levels of leadership and trust not previously required. They become educators and innovators, requiring a level of risk taking not previously appreciated. This significant shift in the role of the public service participants requires a different approach with diverse skills and abilities. Although the role of the public service shifts within a service integrated systems co-production process, public service organisations will remain involved in the co-production of services. Their key role is apply the new understandings of the user touchpoints ascertained through ongoing co-production into the design and implementation of services in ways that integrate the choices of users.

WHO BENEFITS?

The potential for greater innovation is likely to lie in the potential for increased value created through the provision of co-produced services (Alford, 2014; Bovaird, 2007). However, increasing value in service production is about understanding and delivering outcomes, rather than measuring and incentivising or punishing organisations for input, throughput or output. If the stated aims of co-production, as outlined below, are realised, then everyone should benefit from co-production whatever way that it is done:

- Greater ability to get to the root of issues and develop tailored solutions
- Increased motivation and efficiency of services when they are built around the user's needs (Osborne, 2010; Verschuere et al., 2012)
- Greater user satisfaction due to higher service quality (Osborne, 2010)
- Creation of more cohesive communities with greater sense of local ownership
- Building confidence and capacity of individuals and communities (Bovaird, 2007)
- Better use of public resources (Brandsen and Honigh, 2015, p 427; Osborne, 2010; Verschuere et al., 2012).

However, identifying the benefits of co-production is difficult, not only because the exemplars of co-production are confused (see Boxes 1 and 2), or because the models differ significantly (see figures 5 and 6), but also because the academic literature does not provide a systematic review of co-production (see Box 3, Appendix 1 for an overview of representations of co-production benefits in the literature). The expectations of co-production are high and are becoming more critical as governments require leaner and smaller public services. It is, therefore, important that all participating organisations (public, private, profit and not-for-profit) clearly understand the availability and distribution of resources (Verschuere et al., 2010), have a clear understanding of user needs and what will add value to clients, the broader community and the general citizenry, and whether there are any conflicts between these groups (Alford, 2014; Verschuere et al., 2012). All parties must fully understand and agree to the outcomes and the processes, inputs and outputs that will be required to achieve these outcomes (Verschuere et al., 2012), and the relevant decision-making and dispute resolution authority for the outcomes.

While participants to co-produced services are unlikely to care, or even understand, the different models of co-production, the complaints of a product dominant approach may be that it is overly bureaucratic, with lots of paperwork and administrative burden for all participants. It is probable that public servants are removed from the delivery of the service, therefore, they do not understand user needs. Thus, although public servants may benefit from gaining multiple perspectives on the product being developed, the real added value to users is entirely dependent on others.

The service management framework involves users in a more hands on way and this helps address administrative issues and the potential for benefit increases. However, true innovative changes do not always happen with this approach because public services usually operate in silos and are unwilling, or unable, to make significant changes across these. Thus, although co-production could offer benefits throughout the system, to date results have been patchy with ongoing stories of concern (see Box 4, Appendix 1).

The full benefit of co-production could be found at the service integrated systems level; however, this could be a

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS?

This shift in focus from trying to develop innovation per se, to using service integrated co-production as the conduit that would trigger and sustain innovation, requires a different approach from public servants. They are no longer the managers, or the leaders of experts in the design and delivery of services. They are now the stewards and boundary spanners responsible for the achievement of outcomes that add value to service users (Dickinson, Needham, Mangan and Sullivan, 2019).

Public servants will need to determine the best way to use a set of design rules to determine whether to use in-house production, provision of services by another public service agency, partnering with an outside agency to co-produce, or contracting with an outside agency to co-produce. Cost, competition, ability to monitor and revise the service and the level of trust between the public servant and the co-production participants will all influence these decisions.

Co-production is applicable at project, program, organisational and multi-organisational levels and has a focus on innovation rather than on output, throughput or individual cost. Each of these levels of applicability will influence how things are done and challenge managers as they may be responsible for some of the outcomes and part of a project without having control over all of the participants, project milestones or inputs. Designing and delivering public services using a service integrated systems approach to co-production will facilitate true innovation in service delivery. It will also mean public service agencies must step away from the administrative approaches currently used in the product dominant co-production evidenced in Australia and move towards a service integrated systems approach where the hierarchy no longer applies. Rather stewards and boundary spanners will facilitate innovation in the delivery of public services in Australia.

This means the future public servant will need the ability to:

- Manage across programs and achieve outcomes for which they do not control all, or any, of the inputs
- Make nuanced judgements about scope, timing, and resourcing on an array of projects and programs
- Not only manage resources directly and indirectly under their control, but also directly and indirectly influence others who are not under their control or their line of authority
- Set and manage clear objectives and allocate resources to achieve outcomes within a fluid and more interdependent environment than is currently experienced
- Develop and maintain both their own capabilities and, more specifically, those of their team
- Develop adaptive ways of working and have the capacity to adapt
- Develop a depth and breadth of learning
- Influence others as achieving outcomes is less about setting directions and more about developing and maintaining effective relationships.

The public service will be responsible for setting outcomes and priorities across the whole of the public service rather than giving directions within a specific program or silo of a department. They will be setting fiscal prudence and sector wide principles that have accountability, transparency, flexibility and equity without individual levels of management. They will focus on innovation in policy development, service design, implementation and delivery by taking learnings back through to service strategy, systems, and ways of working.

The requirement for public servants to lead expert groups, steward service-wide programs of work and span boundaries within and external to the public service will be significant, and those with these abilities will be prepared for work in this innovative environment.

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APPENDIX I – EXEMPLARS OF CO-PRODUCTION AND ITS BENEFITS

The academic literature reports studies that use different methodologies, methods and approaches to outlining co-production; for example, case studies are used to illustrate specific theoretical aspects of co-production and where it has been successful, and then extended to include, rather than evaluate, the benefits of co-production (Alford, 2002). The case studies are from different countries, with different philosophical policy settings, and different public services for example, child care and health care. More recently, academics have undertaken systematic literature reviews of co-production in a specific service area to explore consistencies or otherwise in co-production (see Palumbo, 2016). The practice literature, on the other hand, is more focused on examples of the failure of co-production to meet the needs of some or all of the participants. The following boxes illustrate both the academic and the practitioner literature.

Box 3: Academic Literature – illustration of the wide variety of approaches to co-production literature

