

Editors' introduction

In this monograph, we present a collection of papers from the ANZSOG conference on collaboration held in 2007. We have been able to draw on a range of perspectives—practitioner and scholarly—to offer a collection focused on the issue of collaborative governance in Australia. Our contributors consider the drivers, challenges, prospects and promises of collaboration, from a conceptual and a practical perspective. We believe this provides a rich resource for readers who are interested in the issue of collaboration in the public sector, and more specifically in public policy.

Throughout the monograph, our contributors draw on their personal experience, their research and their visions for change to offer important insights into the potential of collaboration and the fiercely stubborn impediments to this ideal. You will note that there are differences of opinion, which, of course, are to be expected; we hope they will help in feeding the continuing debate about collaborative governance.

We have organised the monograph in four key sections. In the first, 'Setting the scene', there are six chapters, which provide an introduction for readers to a range of issues including the dimensions and drivers of collaboration, why governments are interested in collaboration, the Australian experience, the notions of collaborative advantage and collaborative inertia, what is meant by success in collaboration and the role of the community sector in collaborative governance.

In the second part, 'The reality of collaboration', we draw on the experience and research of experts to consider success, failure, challenges and questions that arise from attempts at collaboration. In the eight chapters in this section, a range of examples is provided by the authors and many point to traps and lessons that will be of considerable interest and value to readers.

In the third part, 'Collaboration abroad', there are two chapters that provide an international perspective. Drawing on experience and research in the United Kingdom and British Columbia, in Canada, the authors in this section give us a window into developments in other parts of the world, offering promise and words of warning.

In the final part, 'Collaboration: rhetoric and reality', the concluding chapter of the monograph seeks to examine the reality of collaboration in public policy. In this chapter, the author questions whether there is much evidence of true collaboration, raising the possibility that all the collaborative talk has yet to translate into much collaborative action.

Together, these sections offer readers the opportunity to consider collaborative governance in public policy from a range of perspectives, and to engage in the current debate about the value of collaboration.

One of the most important changes since the conference is, of course, the change of government and, along with many of our readers, we are keen to observe what will happen under the leadership of the new Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd. There is certainly a lot of talk, especially about intergovernmental collaboration, but will the Rudd Government be able to 'walk-the-walk'? Only time will tell.

We thank all of our contributors for their efforts in preparing their chapters for the monograph, in particular Peter Shergold, who was prepared to write a postscript after his move from the public service to academia. We especially thank John Butcher who, as usual, works tirelessly to ensure that the ANZSOG monographs are of the highest possible quality.

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