

# Design thinking in government

Leaders roundtable with Professor Jeanne Liedtka

23 September 2016



# Background and intent

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Andrew Kibblewhite, Chief Executive of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Head of the Policy Profession, hosted a round table for senior government leaders and academics from Victoria University with Professor Jeanne Liedtka from the Darden Business School.

The session was to learn about the potential benefits of design thinking for government and what leaders can do to enable and support design thinking and innovation capability, in their organisations and across government.

“Design thinking is a systematic approach to problem solving”

– Jeanne Liedtka

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## Participants

**Professor Jeanne Liedtka**  
Darden Business School  
University of Virginia

**Andrew Kibblewhite**  
Chief Executive  
Department of the Prime  
Minister and Cabinet

**Liz MacPherson**  
Government Statistician

**Pauline Winter**  
Chief Executive  
Ministry of Pacific Peoples

**Naomi Ferguson**  
Commissioner of Inland  
Revenue

**Peter Mersi**  
Chief Executive  
Ministry of Transport

**David Smol**  
Chief Executive  
Ministry of Business, Innovation  
and Employment

**Anneliese Parkin**  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Department of the Prime  
Minister and Cabinet

**Andrew Jackson**  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Ministry of Transport

**Cheryl Barnes**  
Deputy Secretary  
Ministry for the Environment

**Fiona Ross**  
Deputy Secretary  
The Treasury

**Girol Karacaoglu**  
VUW School of Government

**Barbara Allen**  
VUW School of Government

**Verna Smith**  
VUW School of Government

**Dr Michael Macaulay**  
IGPS  
VUW School of Government

### Policy Project team

**Sally Washington**  
Programme Manager

**Jo Hartigan**  
Principal Advisor

**Simon Olsen**  
Senior Advisor

# Benefits of design thinking for government

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## Process for producing better ideas

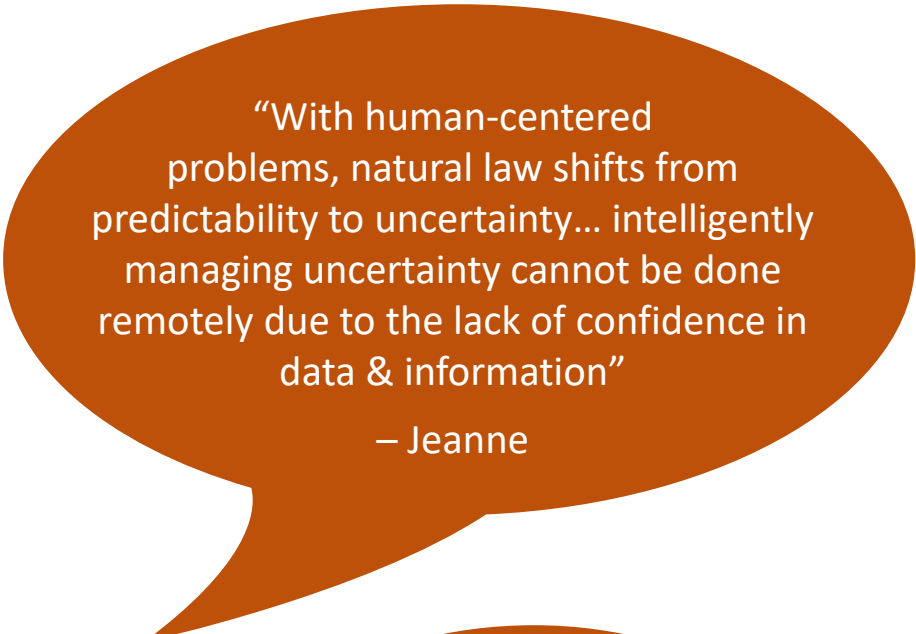
DT provides a robust methodology for uncovering and iterating innovative ideas and solutions. The methodology is grounded in user needs and experiences. It encourages investment in analysis of a portfolio of possibilities/solutions without reference to constraints (these are introduced in testing).

## Risk mitigation strategy

By running small quick experiments in the real world, DT helps to minimise and manage risk. This requires a new skill set: shifting to being hypothesis driven, testing and refining, and drawing on all available data (big and deep).


## Managing change

DT involves people in the change process. Up front time and costs in agreeing intent pay off over time as it facilitates acceptance of the solution, wherever it ends up. A focus on users avoids the common impediment of agency conflict. People are energised by possibilities, not constraints – starting in the possibilities space helps with creativity to deal with constraints later in the process.



“With human-centered problems, natural law shifts from predictability to uncertainty... intelligently managing uncertainty cannot be done remotely due to the lack of confidence in data & information”

– Jeanne



“You need to shift people from short-term self-interest to longer-term greater good”

– Jeanne

# Benefits of design thinking for government

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## Aligning diverse stakeholders

DT brings 'the system' into the room, by using stakeholder mapping and aligning diverse perspectives.

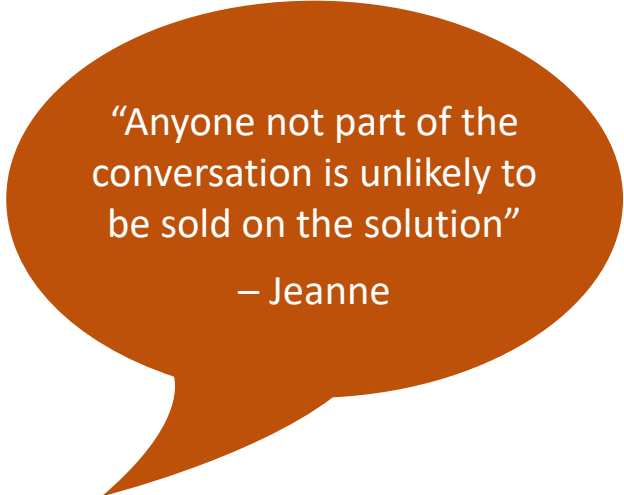
It offers the 'social technology' to have more effective conversations among diverse stakeholders, providing a path for higher order solutions and avoiding 'satisficing' compromises (the typical low return way of dealing with difference). It gives better information (about users and others in the value chain) to make better strategy and policy choices for delivery.

## Empowering local capabilities

DT provides the infrastructure for content to be derived at the local level – and the discipline to enable solutions that work locally to be scaled and spread wider.

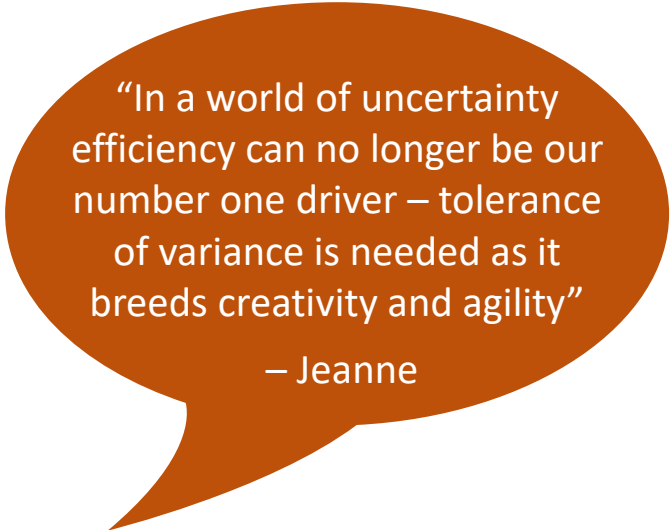
## Increasing the speed of innovation

DT values diversity. Diversity is the key to decision creativity, integrity and resilience. When innovating in a complex system, slowness impedes motivation and momentum – DT builds alignment around what really matters. Rapid iteration is a key part of the process.

A brown speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the top-left.

“Anyone not part of the conversation is unlikely to be sold on the solution”

– Jeanne

A brown speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the top-left.

“In a world of uncertainty efficiency can no longer be our number one driver – tolerance of variance is needed as it breeds creativity and agility”

– Jeanne

# Questions and responses

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## How does this relate to politics and taking solutions through to decisions and legislation?

DT allows for small scale trials, using real world data, that avoids the visibility of politics – it helps to provide knowledge about the likely effects of regulation through experimentation prior to it being enacted.


Starting small in the midst of complexity enables a good use of resources, ‘below the radar’ experimentation before formalising and scaling the solution.

## How can leaders support design thinking?

Senior leaders can be enablers by providing the infrastructure and culture – including permission for intelligent risk taking and experimentation.


It is best to combine the ‘grass roots’ approach with senior leadership support (top-down and bottom up). Leaders need to ‘walk the talk’.

Lack of an experimental intelligent risk-taking culture is the biggest impediment to creating an innovative micro-climate.



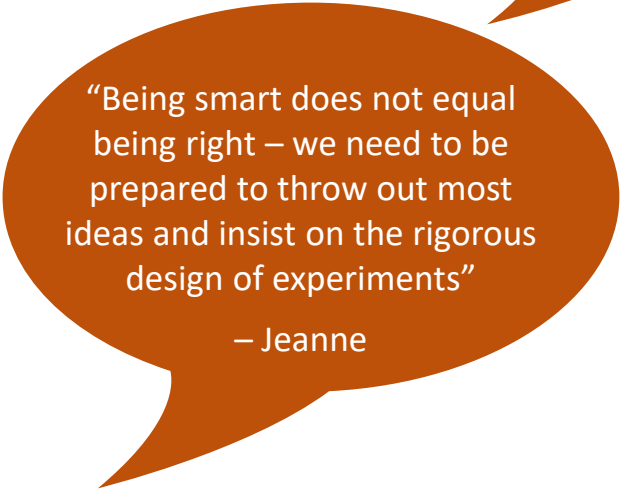
“Senior mandarins perceive their core business to be finding compromise. How could we involve ministers in surfacing possible solutions?”

– Chief executive



“Gaining political buy-in is a separate process but could be supported by design thinking”

– Chief executive



“Being smart does not equal being right – we need to be prepared to throw out most ideas and insist on the rigorous design of experiments”

– Jeanne

# Questions and responses

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## How might we organise ourselves to build capability in design thinking?

Provide a clear path for when design thinking and innovation is required and will be accepted.

Offer some rigorous design thinking training, focusing on those who are willing and interested – don't impose it.

Invest in some deep capability and expertise (e.g. a Lab with design capability and design thinking 'mentors').

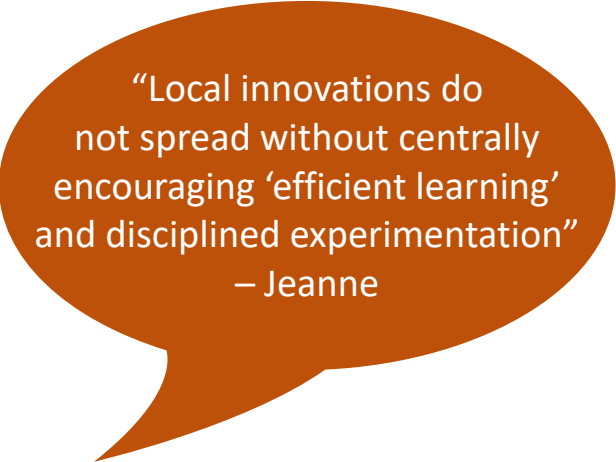
Create experiences with design thinking tools as a vehicle for changing mind-sets.

## Where does design thinking fit with technology tools (for engagement)?


Technology can support design thinking depending on the difficulty of the challenge/problem and stage of the process.

Technological tools can be used to surface opinions as input to the process.

Trust is an important part of the design process so engagement using technology is unlikely to enable alignment – face to face interaction is best for dealing with conflict and conflicting perspectives.



“Local innovations do not spread without centrally encouraging ‘efficient learning’ and disciplined experimentation”  
– Jeanne



“We need to go beyond playing with methods – we need to apply those methods to real problems, and create demonstration projects, to show the true value of design thinking”  
– Participant

# Questions and responses

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## Is design thinking an end-to-end process or can you use design thinking ‘bit-by-bit’?

Think of design thinking as a toolkit – some of the tools can be used for any problem solving process – it helps to use the output/insights from whatever tool into the next task/phase/level of decision making. To do this people may need to have a sense of the end-to-end process first, or they will struggle with what the process is all for. Design thinking is most powerful for human-centred problems where we don’t have existing data or information to tell us what to do.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to Michael Macaulay and VUW for partnering on the session and for providing the space and refreshments.

Thanks to the government leaders and VUW academics who participated in the spirit of learning and discovery.

Many thanks to Jeanne Liedtka for sharing her insights, expertise and inspiration.

“Design thinking is not for every challenge  
– it is most valuable for human-centred problems”

– Jeanne Liedtka



# Annex: Design thinking – the Darden method



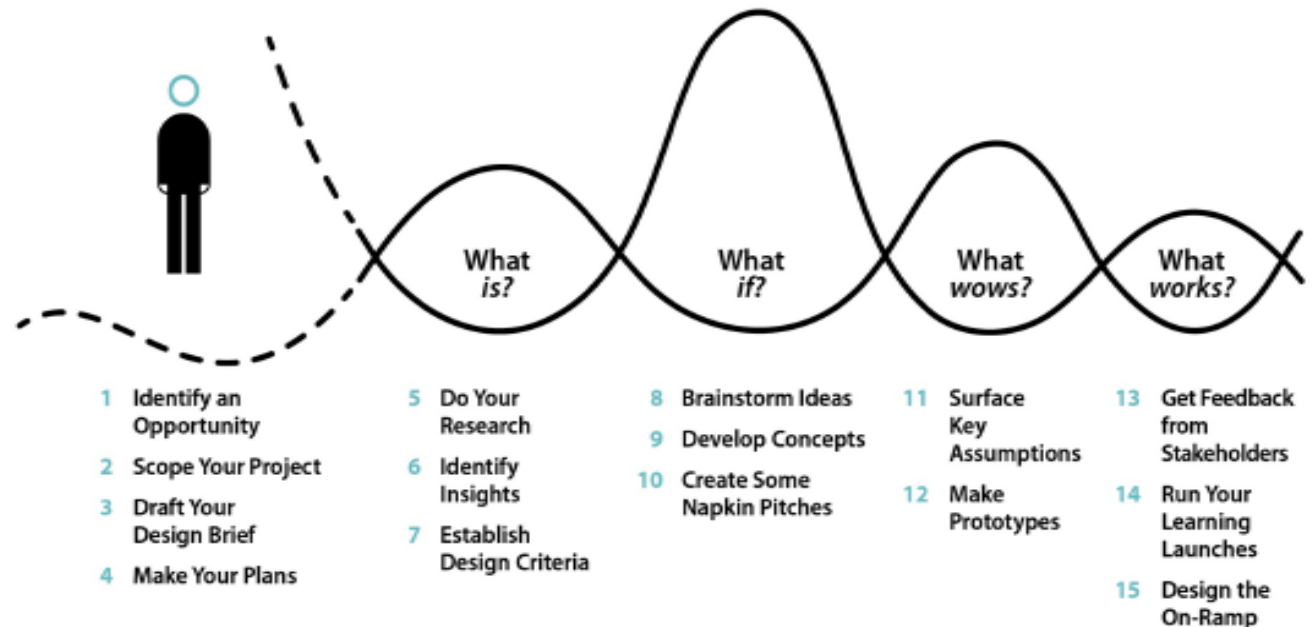
## Want to know more?

If you are interested in learning more about Jeanne Liedtka and the Darden approach to design thinking check out:

[www.darden.virginia.edu/faculty-research/directory/jeanne-m-liedtka](http://www.darden.virginia.edu/faculty-research/directory/jeanne-m-liedtka) for information on Jeanne and her research.

[www.jeanneliedtka.com](http://www.jeanneliedtka.com) for resources including videos on innovation and design thinking.

## Steps to Designing For Growth





# Annex: Design thinking – the Darden method

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## Design thinking – thinking design

If we thought more like designers what would be different?

Problem solving would be driven by three core beliefs:

- **Empathy** – start by establishing a deep understanding of human needs
- **Invention** – discover new possibilities
- **Iteration** – use the first solutions only as stepping stones to a better one

Jeanne Liedtka – ANZSOG seminar

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See more information [here](#)

## 10 Design thinking tools

- Visualisation
- Journey mapping
- Value chain analysis
- Mind mapping
- Rapid concept development
- Assumption testing
- Customer co-creation
- Storytelling



[www.ideas.darden.virginia.edu/2016/07/10-design-thinking-tools-turn-creativity-and-data-into-growth](http://www.ideas.darden.virginia.edu/2016/07/10-design-thinking-tools-turn-creativity-and-data-into-growth)