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# Productivity and Open Access to Public Sector Information

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# Focusing

- This is not just about “Government Productivity”, but about productivity in the economy generally – this of course includes government
- “Open access” to public sector information does not mean all government information is available to non-custodians – there are important reasons to restrict access



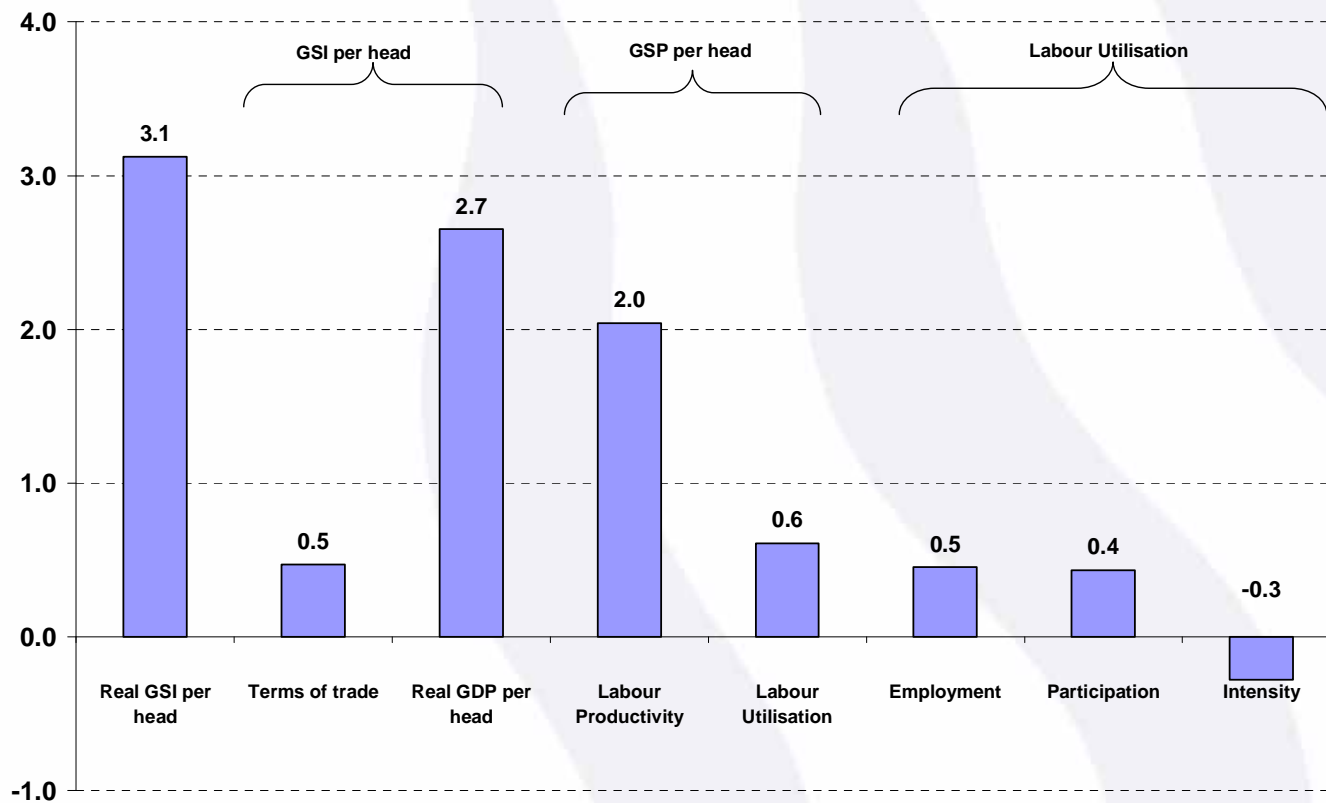
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# Economic Growth

- Critical for economic and social progress and security
- Drivers of per capita state or national income are:
  - ✓ Labour productivity
  - ✓ Labour utilisation, including
    - ☐ Employment, less unemployment
    - ☐ Participation, more activity
    - ☐ Intensity, work longer
  - ✓ Terms of trade
- Economic growth accounting decomposition

# Drivers of Growth

Decomposition of growth in GSI per head, 1993-94 to 2005-06





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# What is Productivity?

- Labour productivity is output per unit of labour input
- Growth in labour productivity has two sources:
  - ✓ Multifactor productivity (MFP) i.e. working smarter, more innovatively, doing things differently and better; and
  - ✓ Capital deepening i.e. improving the use of capital by workers e.g. using new machines, or using machines better.
- Problem is – productivity is a treadmill.



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# Innovation

- A process of continuous change
- Innovation is the essence of productivity, in a sense, it is the same thing
- An essential pre-condition to “good” change is information
- Evidence based policy and decision making – in government, households and business
- Keynes “ When I get new information, I change my mind. What do you do?”



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# Statistics

- An important “type” of information
- The “market’ for statistics – supply and demand
- Gaps – how would one know?
- Priorities – aka demand, what about supply?
- Collection costs – direct and indirect
- By-products – administrative, ICT
- Inertia and lags in recognition, reaction
- Confusion and lack of “connection”



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# Administrative Statistics

- This is what we already have, and it is growing
- Imperfect understanding of what there is out there
- Custodians know, sometimes in isolation
- Many potential users do not know
- Many restrictions – some genuine, others unnecessary
- We should make information about these datasets clear to all potential users
- Custodians cannot know of potential uses by users – let the users know that administrative data exists, and what the access arrangements are
- Before we collect directly, see what is already collected



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# Transparency

- Minimises costs
- Creates pressure for improvements (“if we added an identifier for Indigenous status, this would enable the data to be used for... and would prevent the need for another costly, difficult and intrusive survey...”) in quality and quantity
- Maximises potential use

# In practice, what can be done?

- Need practical actions
- Simple, cheap, good returns, early runs on the board, low hanging fruit, take the points
- Three practical things to do:
  - ✓ Metadata registries;
  - ✓ Licensing; and
  - ✓ Do not do daft things e.g. lock up all data, commoditise all data, or centralise data.



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# Metadata Registries

- Example in Queensland – the Register of Strategic Information (ROSI)
- Best generic example – library catalogues
- Keep it simple, let professionals organise it
- Make it a core responsibility of custodians and accountable officers
- Stick metadata on your website and make it searchable by a web search engine
- Keep risks allocated properly, costs down, and minimises errors (multiple copies of some strategic datasets)



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# Licensing

- Metadata registries must contain metadata, but not necessarily data
- Metadata should clarify access conditions
- Data currently restricted because many custodians do not have simple, legally valid access to licensing advice or means
- Creative commons helps in the great majority of cases – solves this problem
- Some data will require more detail
- Queensland approach includes research on GILF



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# Productivity

- Clearing the public sector's information "market" will help MFP through better decisions and policy
- What about capital deepening?
- This is important too
- Workers need more and better capital
- They need skilling to operate this capital as well as access to it
- Information is capital



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# Capital

- We easily understand physical capital – roads, buildings, computers, staplers
- We pay a lot of lip service to intangible capital
- This includes information, or in my world, statistics
- Need to go beyond glib phrases and make it happen



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## Not ICT

- ICT hardware is commonly understood to be capital, as a “machine” is understood to add value to a worker
- Even software is getting there
- But information, as such, is still the forgotten stock of assets
- Proof: we are here today



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# Help the workers

- Give the workers – researchers, policy analysts and makers, decision makers – the tools for the job
- This includes the actual information they require for business decisions, evidence based policy – including information which is already held by the public sector
- Innovative (but secure) data matching and integration will be enabled and will deliver more capital
- Workers in their role as consumers also could use this information



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## What can we do?

- Reduce search costs
- Increase volumes – possible uses are unpredictable and are in the hands of innovators (and we expect innovation)
- Reduce risks for users and custodians and accountable officers
- This will add to our stock of statistical (and other information) capital



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# Productivity and Innovation

- You cannot command it
- You can set conditions for it to happen
- The two main economic policy principles:
  - ✓ Improve flexibility e.g. remove all unnecessary restrictions
  - ✓ Provide appropriate incentives e.g. encourage or provide reasons for change



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# The Result

- Real evidence based capability for policy and decision making
- Real changes
- Economic growth from productivity
- Societal improvement with better outcomes
- Nothing can be guaranteed, but, statistically speaking, it would certainly seem to improve the chances of success