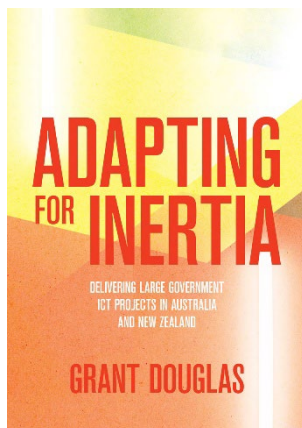


To the Committee Secretary,

Senator Colbeck asked me today about IT contracts and I promised to provide the reference I mentioned in reply. The information below is taken from the ANU Press website. The author, Dr Grant Douglas, also wrote an article published in *The Mandarin* just a few weeks ago ('No Minister: Public sector forecasting is simply a mug's game', 20 January 2026); he also had an article, 'Why government ICT projects continue to fail', published in *The Mandarin* on 19 March 2025.

Regards,

Andrew Podger



[Adapting for Inertia ?](#)

Delivering Large Government ICT Projects in Australia and New Zealand

Authored by: [Grant Douglas](#)

Publication date: October 2023

Despite much learning and research over many decades, large ICT software projects have continued to experience poor outcomes or fallen short of original expectations—some spectacularly so. This is the case in the Australian and New Zealand public sectors, even though these projects operate within historically developed institutional frameworks that provide the rules, guidelines and controls, and aim to consistently improve outcomes. Something is amiss. In *Adapting for Inertia*, Grant Douglas questions the effectiveness of these institutional frameworks in governing large ICT software projects in the Australian and New Zealand public sectors. He also gauges the perspectives of a large number of actors in projects in both sectors and examines two case studies in detail. The main narrative to emerge is that the institutional frameworks are in a state of inertia: they are failing to adapt, owing to various institutional factors—all of which have public policy implications. Sadly, Douglas finds, this inertia is likely to continue. If there is difficulty in changing the capacity to govern, he proposes, policymakers should look to change the nature of what is to be governed.

Author / Editors

[Grant Douglas ?](#)

Grant Douglas, a former long-time employee of the New South Wales government, has managed various ICT projects and programs. This experience exposed him to many of the factors that can make these types of projects, and their governance frameworks, so challenging. After leaving the sector, Douglas completed a PhD at The Australian National University.

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Key publications:

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Wanna, John, Sam Vincent and Andrew Podger (eds), 2012. *With the benefit of hindsight: Valedictory reflections from departmental secretaries, 2004-11*, ANU E Press

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