



Australia Awards  
Women's Leadership Initiative

# Developmental Leadership, Coalitions and Thinking & Working Politically (TWP)

Georgina Cope & Mereani Rokotuibau

September 2019





# WLI's Understanding of Leadership

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A quick recap from Intensive 1 . . .

What are some of the key features/ characteristics  
WLI's conception of "Leadership"?

*Group brainstorm/ discussion*



# WLI's Understanding of Leadership (cont)

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On WLI, “leadership” . . .

- Involves (positive) change
- Can be difficult and uncomfortable
- Is complex – multiple interests and influences
- Can be risky and dangerous
- Involves disappointment and loss





# Revisiting key definitions: Developmental Leadership (DL)

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Developmental Leadership is “a *political process* of *mobilising people and resources* in pursuit of shared goals for the *common good*.”

This definition recognises that leadership is:

- *Shaped by the context* (cultural, historical, institutional and political) in which it is exercised.
- *A dynamic, collective and political process* involving ongoing negotiation, sharing of skills and resources, and the identification of a common goal.
- *Able to be exercised in all spheres and ‘levels’ of society* - not just in Government, or in senior roles).



# Revisiting key definitions: DL, TWP and Coalitions

**Adaptive  
Leadership**  
(more on this later!)

## **Developmental Leadership (DL)**

Mobilising people and resources in  
pursuit of shared goals for the common  
good

**Thinking and Working  
Politically (TWP)**  
Working strategically and  
innovatively (“politically”) to  
progress change. Context  
is key.

**Coalitions**  
Individuals and / or  
organisations working together  
on a common development  
problem.



## DL, TWP and Coalitions in practice

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Think about an issue or challenge you are dealing with at the moment and on which you want to make some positive progress/ change.

Can you identify some of these concepts playing out in real life? Are they coalitions forming around a particular issue? Who is thinking and working politically and in what ways?

*Discuss in your tables (10 minutes)*





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# Adaptive Leadership and the Leadership of Change

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# What is Adaptive Leadership?

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- The practise of mobilising people and resources to tackle tough challenges
- Involves learning, taking informed risks and experimentation – and a commitment to the ‘long game’
- Leadership is an exercise and not a POSITION





# Leadership vs Authority

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What do you think are the main differences between an authority and an adaptive leader?

*Discuss with the person next to you (5 minutes)*



# Leadership vs Authority

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<u>AREA OF FOCUS</u>	<u>TECHNICAL</u>	<u>ADAPTIVE</u>
DIRECTION	PROVIDE PROBLEM DEFINITION & SOLUTION	IDENTIFY THE ADAPTIVE CHALLENGE; FRAME KEY QUESTIONS & ISSUES
PROTECTION	PROTECT FROM EXTERNAL THREATS	DISCLOSE EXTERNAL THREATS
ORDER: ORIENTATION	ORIENT PEOPLE TO CURRENT ROLES	DISORIENT CURRENT ROLES; RESIST ORIENTING PEOPLE TO NEW ROLES TOO QUICKLY
CONFLICT	RESTORE ORDER	EXPOSE CONFLICT OR LET IT EMERGE
NORMS	MAINTAIN NORMS	CHALLENGE NORMS OR LET THEM BE CHALLENGED



# Technical vs Adaptive Challenges

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## Technical Challenges

- Are easy to recognise
- You know how to solve them
- Have a clear problem and clear solution
- An expert or authority can complete or delegate the task
- Can be solved with facts, information, knowledge and subject matter expertise

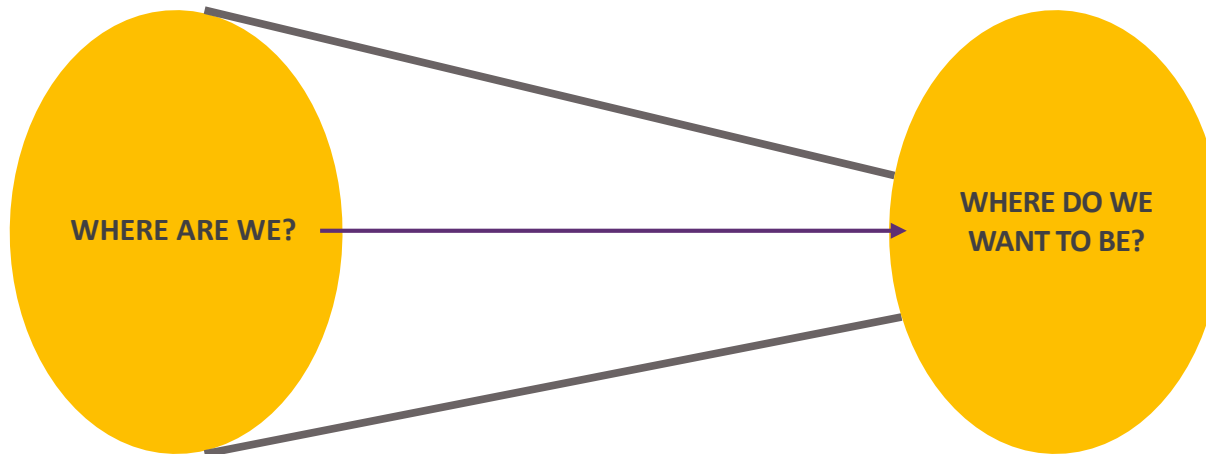


# Technical Challenges

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What is the known solution that needs to be applied?

***What is the expected outcome?***



How can we do it best?

***What is the best process?***

***What resources do we have to use?***

***Who is going to do it?***



# Technical vs Adaptive Challenges

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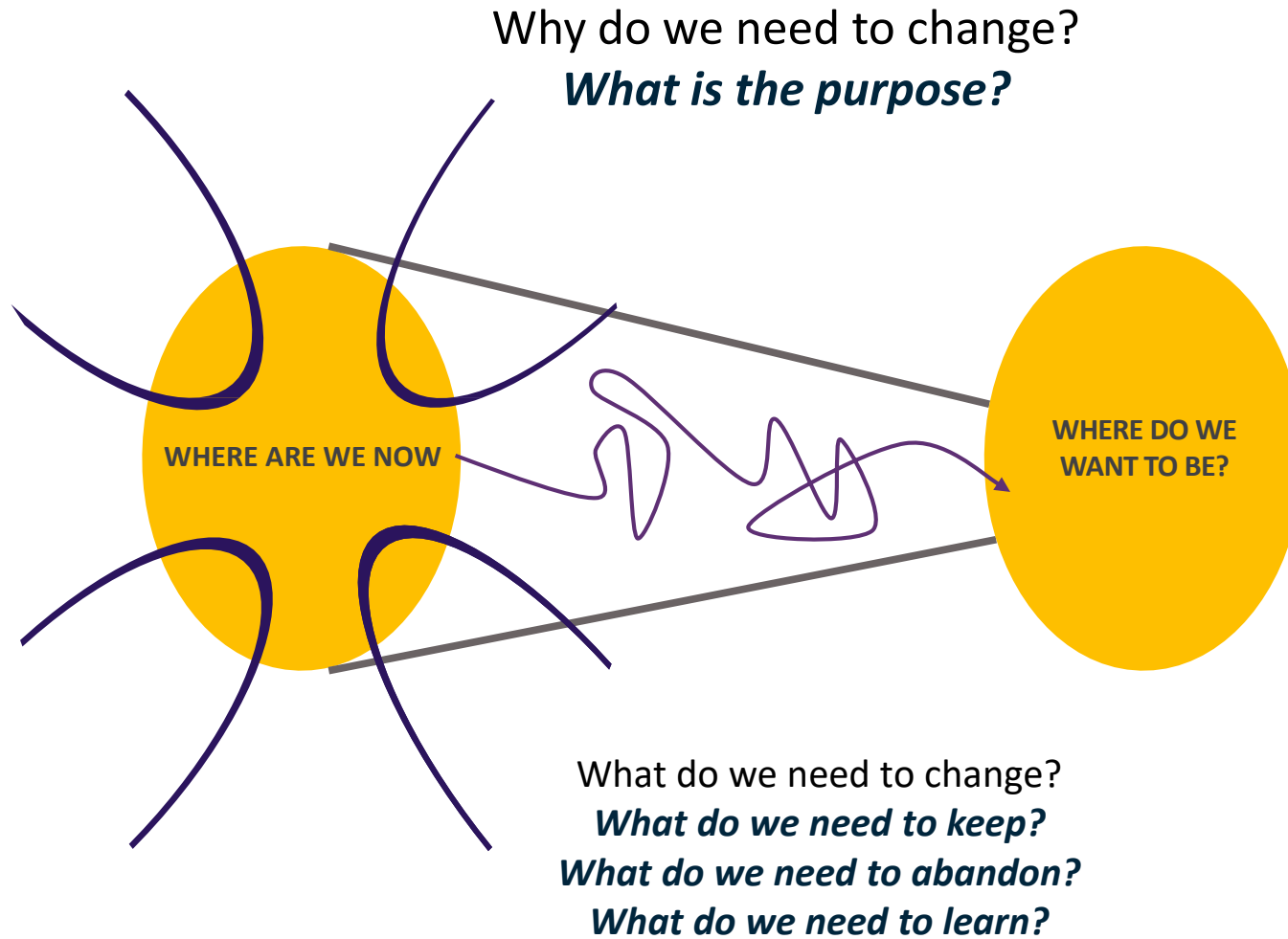
## Adaptive Challenges

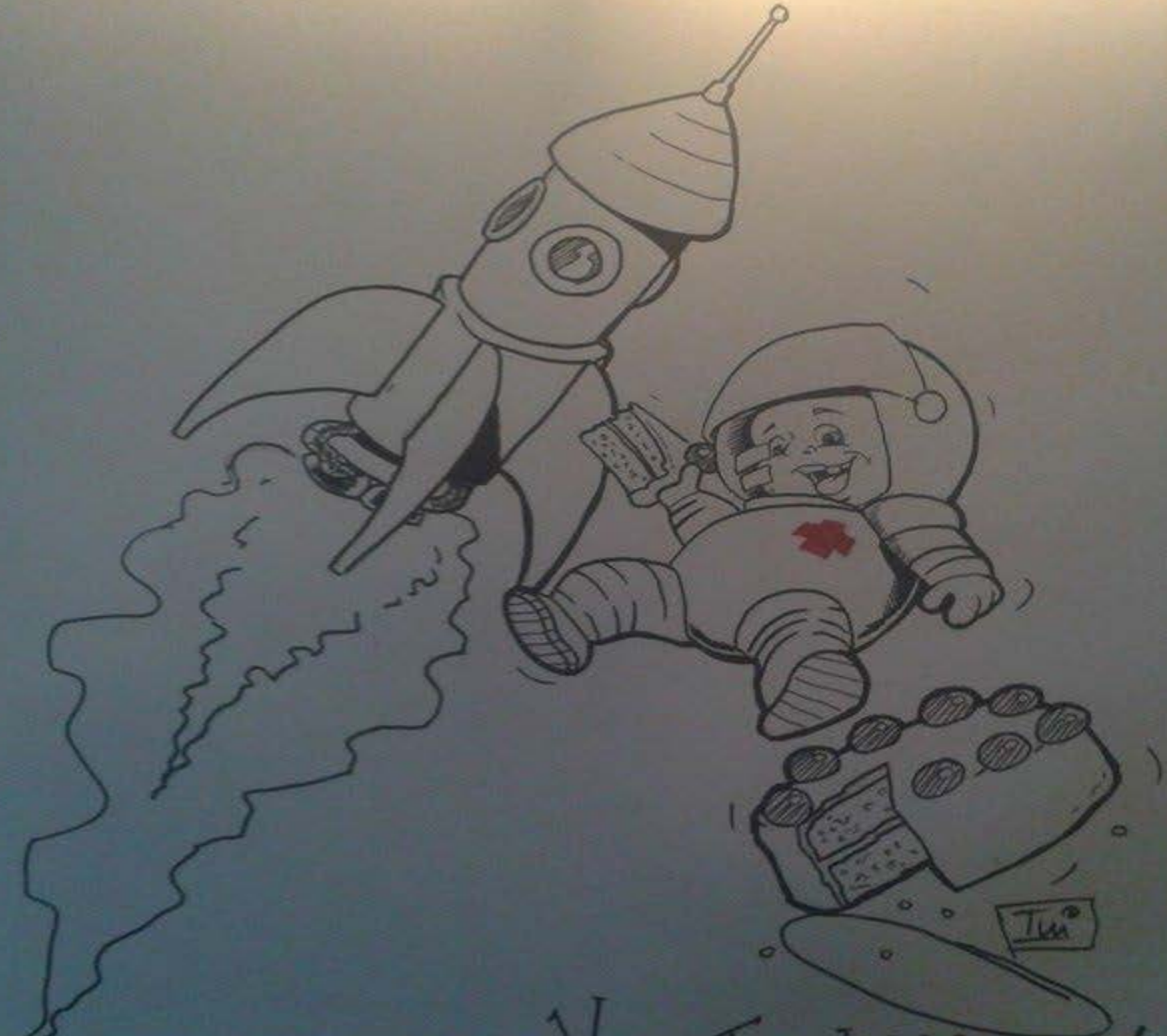
- No known solution – “wicked” and recurring problems
- Progress is not linear— no direct path to get to a better outcome; trial and error is necessary.
- People would rather avoid the issue, or put in “too hard” basket
- Reason and logic alone won’t get you there
- Generates high emotions
- Moving forward feels risky—making progress on this challenge means putting your reputation, relationships, and job at risk.
- Casualties—in order to move forward, some people may be left behind.
- People must work across boundaries—no one person or group can fix the problem alone.



# Adaptive Challenges

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ADAPTIVE VS TECHNICAL

# The Classic Error

*Treating*

*Adaptive Challenges*

*as if they were*

*Technical Problems*

***Remember Cake, Rocket and Baby?***



# The Seduction of Technical Solutions

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Treating adaptive challenges with technical solutions is a common mistake. Why does this happen?

- Desire to make progress – pressure of timeframes
- Need to be seen as a problem solver
- Protect vulnerabilities and weaknesses
- Inability to deal with conflict and tough decisions
- Lack of competence/ expertise/ understanding of context



# Technical versus Adaptive Challenges

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Think about an issue or challenge you are dealing with at the moment and on which you want to make some positive progress/change

Is it a technical challenge, or an adaptive one – or does it have components of both?

Discuss with the person next to you (10 minutes)



# Adaptive Leadership Tools #1

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## Thinking and Working Politically

- Find allies and partners (you can't do it alone)
- Keep your opponents close
- Accept responsibility for your piece of the mess (you are part of the system you are trying to change)
- Acknowledge the losses for others but try to make them bearable
- Model the behaviour you want to see in others



# Adaptive Leadership Tools #2

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## Hold Steady

- Take the heat (but look after yourself)
- Let the issues ripen
- Focus attention on the issues: don't get distracted



# Adaptive Leadership Tools #3

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## The Personal Challenge – Staying Alive

- Use confidantes and allies
- Distinguish role from self
- Anchor yourself
- Preserve your sense of purpose
- Be kind to yourself!



# Remember . . . always Connect to your Purpose

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- Leadership is hard work!
- The only reason to address an adaptive challenge is if something important (to you, and others) is at stake.
- Doing adaptive work means being a greater steward of your purpose in creating value for your organization, your community and those around you, and, most importantly, for yourself.

