



The ABS journey so far

How Agile is being applied within government in pragmatic ways

Presented by: **Juliet Fallace**
Agile Capability Lead,
Australian Bureau of Statistics



1. A waterfall agency to agile

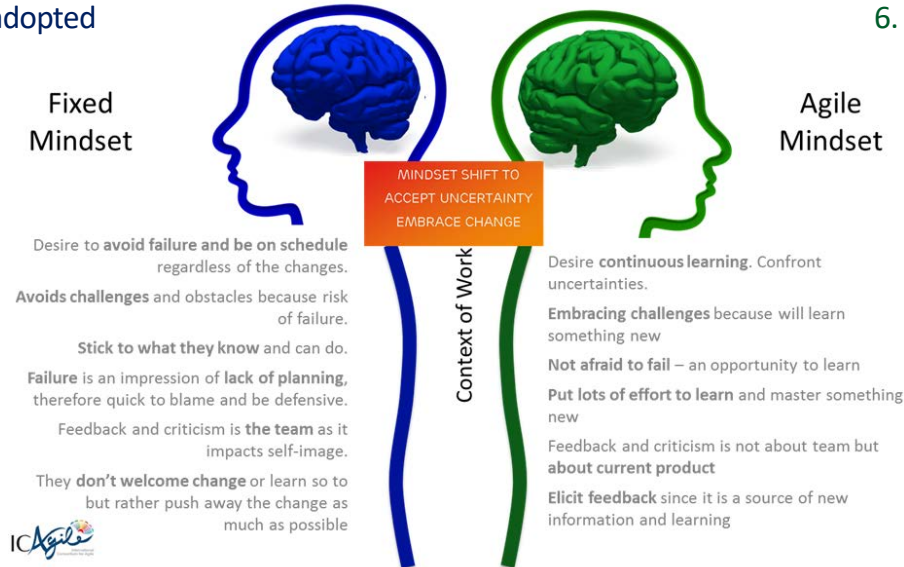


1. **Sequenced** approach
2. Must deliver on **time** mindset
3. Risks/issues **harder** to manage
4. Failure **not** an option
5. Feedback and criticism **not accepted**
6. Learning and improvement **not** adopted

I believe that my **[work]** is locked-down or fixed. My requirements are determined at the start. They shouldn't change.

I believe that my **[work]** can be continuously developed. The true requirements are unknown and unknowable.

1. **Experimental** approach
2. Must deliver **value**
3. Risks/issues **easier** to manage
4. Failure **an** option
5. Feedback and criticism **accepted**
6. Learning and improvement **adopted**



2. Why is ABS adopting agile?



3. Retrospective... what didn't work?

Engaging external coaches and undertaking reviews can lead to

- Defensiveness
- Teams/people feel threatened
- Resistance
- Blame

Sending business people to 3 days of agile training can lead to

- Failure
- Fear
- Resistance

- Requires organisational culture change
- Requires individual mindset and behavioural change
- Leaders changing their mindset and behaviours
- Know organisational appetite to change
- Needs investment



4. Retrospective... so what worked?

Bringing in experts

- Executive recognising they need to change mindset
- Organisation culture needs to change
- Stop talking AGILE
- Start talking VALUE

Engaging with business and educating on the value of AGILE

- Start with the basics and build up maturity
- Buy-in
- Momentum
- Interest

Success of the Marriage Survey

- Pragmatic approaches
- “Sign me up” attitude





Turnbull seeks end to marriage debate with \$122m postal vote

Census bunglers make a comeback with hopeless Bureau of Statistics to run plebiscite



PM to go postal

6. A challenge or an opportunity?

Postal same-sex marriage plebiscite a mission that could make or break ABS

64m forms, envelopes
and letters to produce

Largest mail-out in
Australian history

99 days to data release

First ever Direction from
Government to ABS

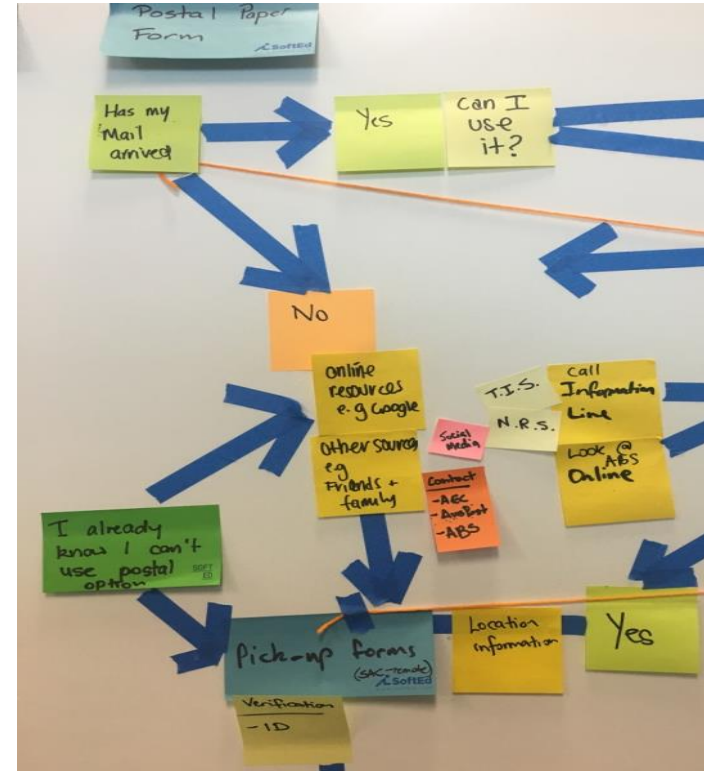
36 hours to design and
launch campaign

4 days to establish a call
centre

Inclusion strategies needed for Australians... overseas, with disabilities, in corrective services, experiencing homelessness, from multicultural communities, and in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

7. Applying agile methodologies pragmatically

- Kanban Boards to visualise work
- Stand-ups for transparency and on the spot decisions
- Priorities and goal were clear
- Make the most of cross functional teams
- Commit to ongoing application and learning



8. Building a strong taskforce team

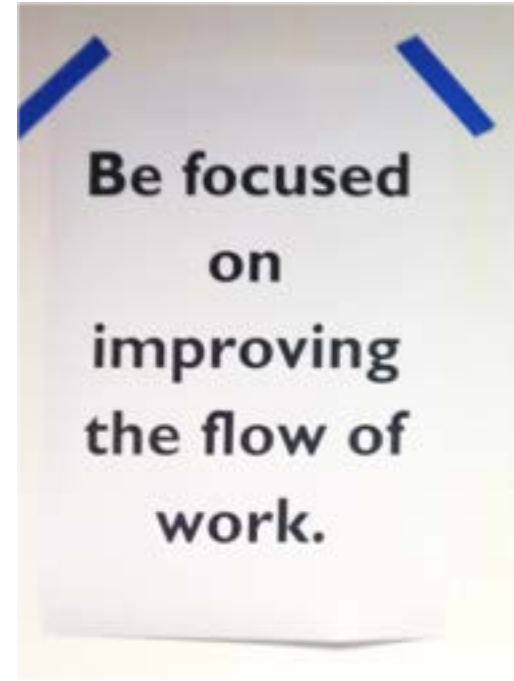
- Design teams around expertise, not level
- Trust our motivated and talented people
- Locate management team on the floor
- Be open about mistakes and move on
- Celebrate success regularly
- Be honest about own strengths and limitations



9. Making good decisions rapidly



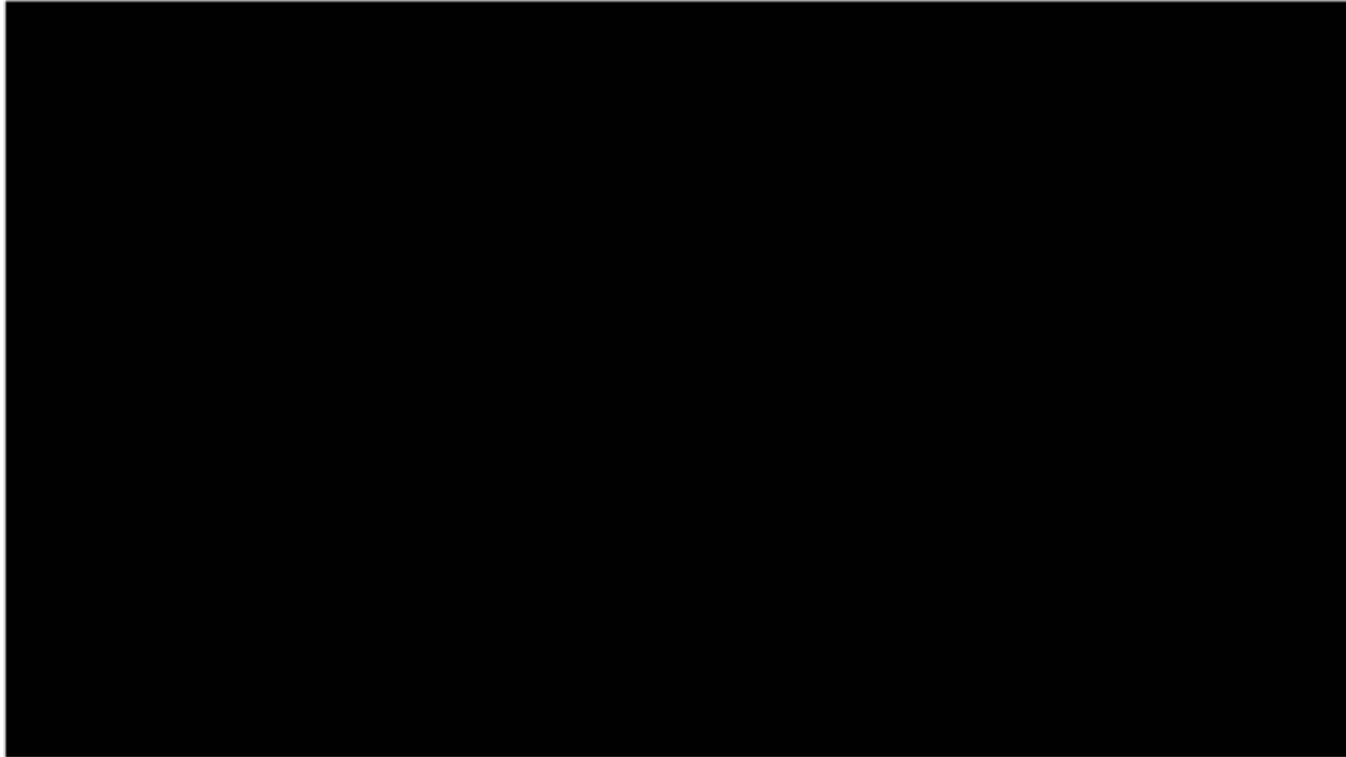
- Empower staff to make decisions
- Immerse decision-makers in context
- Impose fewer layers of authority
- Major decisions, issues and risks were clearly tracked
- Risks were understood part of design stage and communicated



10. Being agile and responsive



What people on the taskforce said...



11. The result? A successful survey



79.5%
Response rate

Released
on time

\$40m under
budget

"The approach adopted by the ABS was innovative, thorough and comprehensive and has supported the transparent and rigorous management of risks to the Survey."

Protiviti (Independent Assurer)

12. “Most significant Historic Event in Living Memory”



13. Futurespective: What business teams now understand

Minimises waste, effort and the cost to deliver products



Encourages teams to create a culture to seek feedback from their customers (early and often)

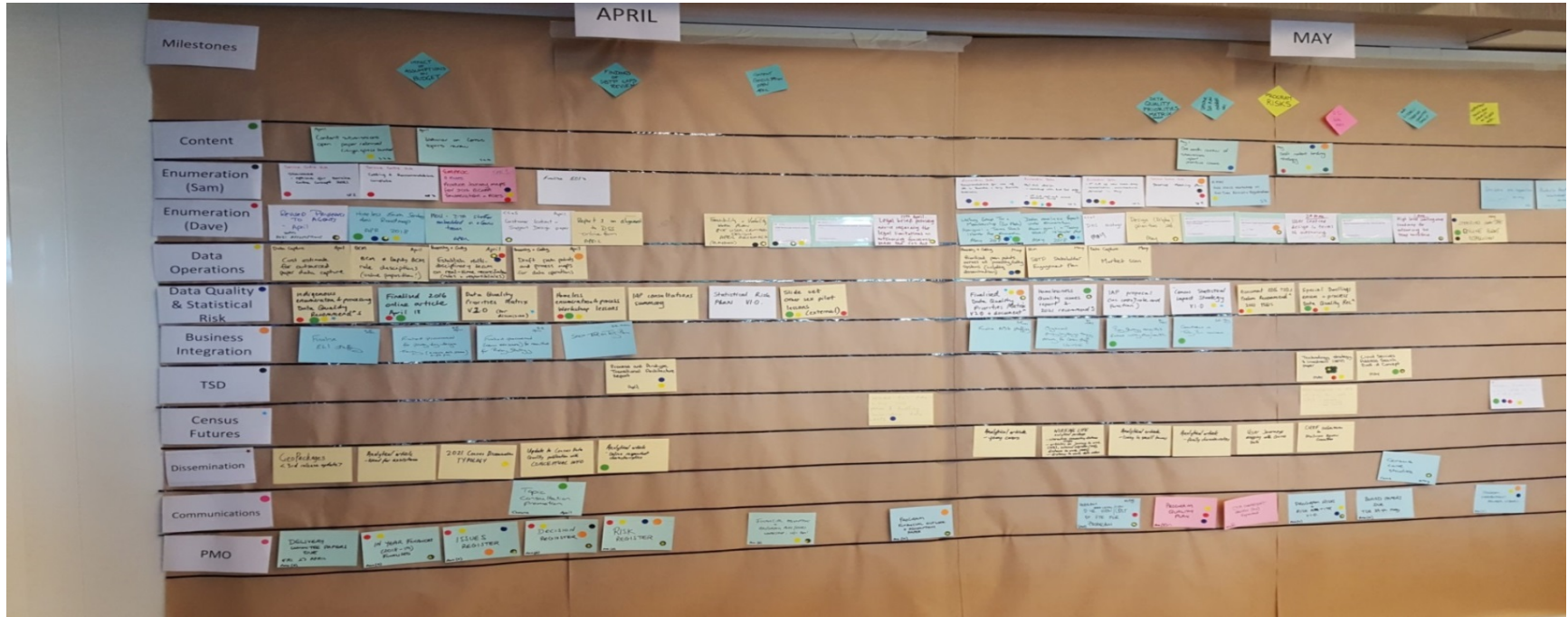
Experiment and empower teams - be iterative and deliver value to the customer continuously, inspecting and adapting

Enables teams to deliver their work through visualisation and transparent ways

14. Applying agile pragmatically – What Business teams are doing



Executive team – 3 monthly Planning Kanban



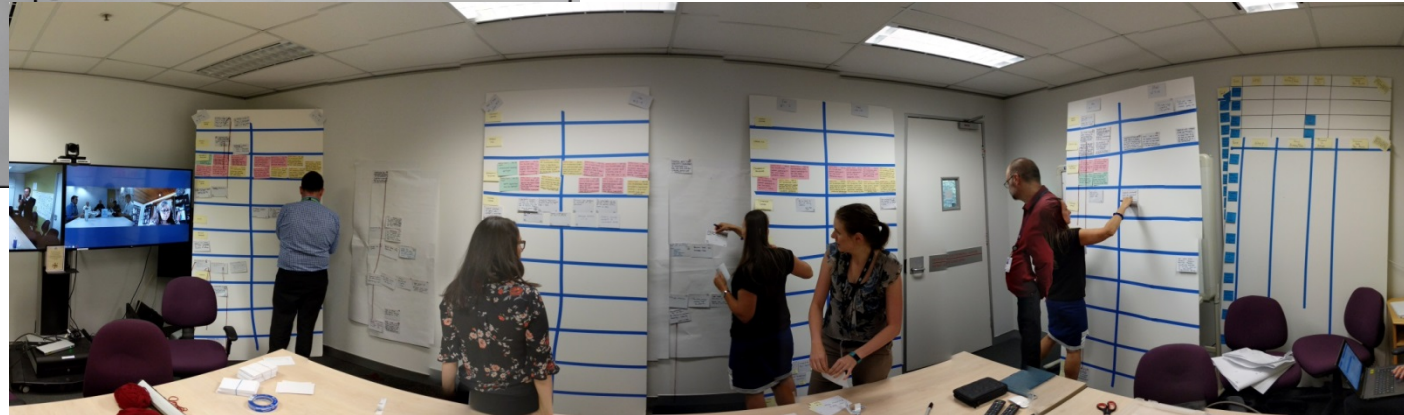
15. Sprint Planning – Census 2021



<p>1 PROBLEM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not currently well positioned to support responsive Conversation - Test & iterative development/improvement under a "re-use 2016" model - Improved responsiveness re test state, supporting metadata, repeatable setup, - Improve visibility of model to business, (their ability to understand) - Not aware of platform / reqs - Technical knowledge lacking 	<p>4 SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set of functional baseline sub-projects that can be freely overlaid & contrasted. - User-facing tools for - Frame load, reset, metadata exposure - Visualisation of frame 	<p>5 VALUE (BENEFITS)</p> <p>USER VALUE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better understand baseline & progress change - User-Driven data/behaviour <p>BUSINESS VALUE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contrast 2016 model more effectively 	<p>3 USER NEEDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to define and location Register → Active Frame load quickly & easily - the Understand system modelling & metadata easily so pain points & changes can be specified - Visualise the Frame 	<p>2 USERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing and growing TA teams (ourselves) - Increasing external experts (contractors etc) - Integration team [?] on business side - Devision users re 2016/2010 reuse - Platform areas
<p>8 COST STRUCTURE</p>	<p>9 KEY ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>TIME CRITICALITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inter-ignite to other qualifying activities <p>OPPORTUNITY/RISK REDUCTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical coverage of existing solution can position to enhance under reuse - del. Security understanding <p>SIZE</p> <p>(S) (M) (L) (XL)</p>	<p>6 CHANNELS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diagram and/or documentation re services coverage. - Access to data via some (limited tool)? - API presentation of 1 frame load & collection set 	<p>7 ASSUMPTIONS & DEPENDENCIES</p>

Executive team planning exercise to help define

- What the problem/solution is
- What the value is
- Who the users are and their needs



16. Sprint Planning – Statistical production teams



Business teams coming together to

- define user stories
- identify dependencies
- determine priorities

17. Creating a roadmap



Business teams coming together to

- Define dependencies
- Identify highest valued work

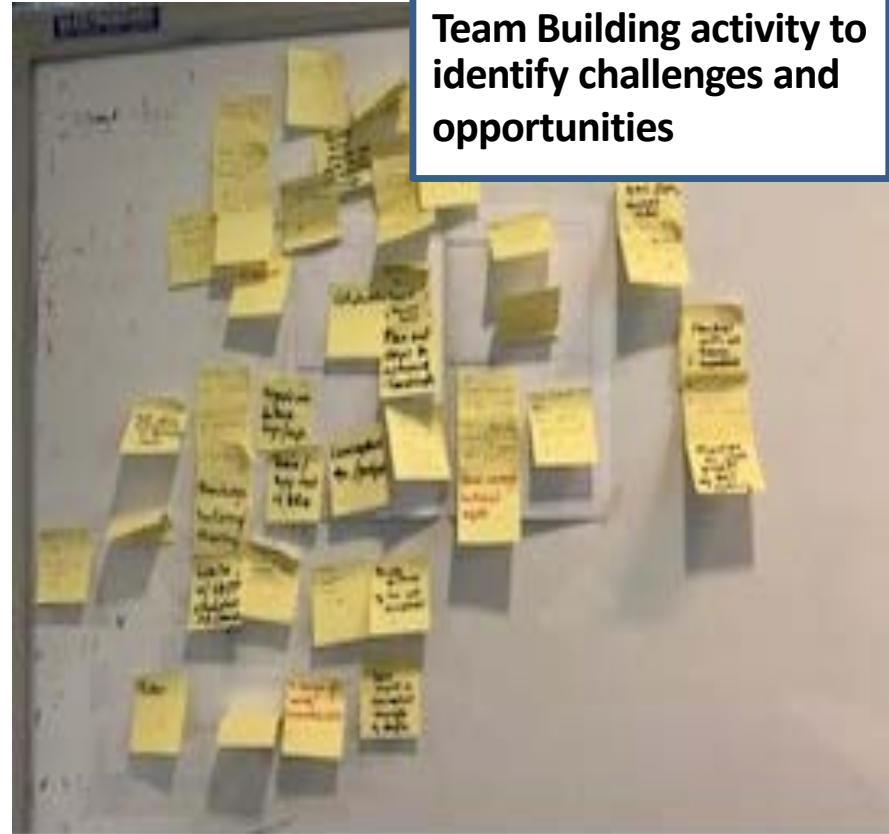
18. Retrospectives – inspect and adapt



Helping teams to
identify strengths and
weaknesses



Team Building activity to
identify challenges and
opportunities



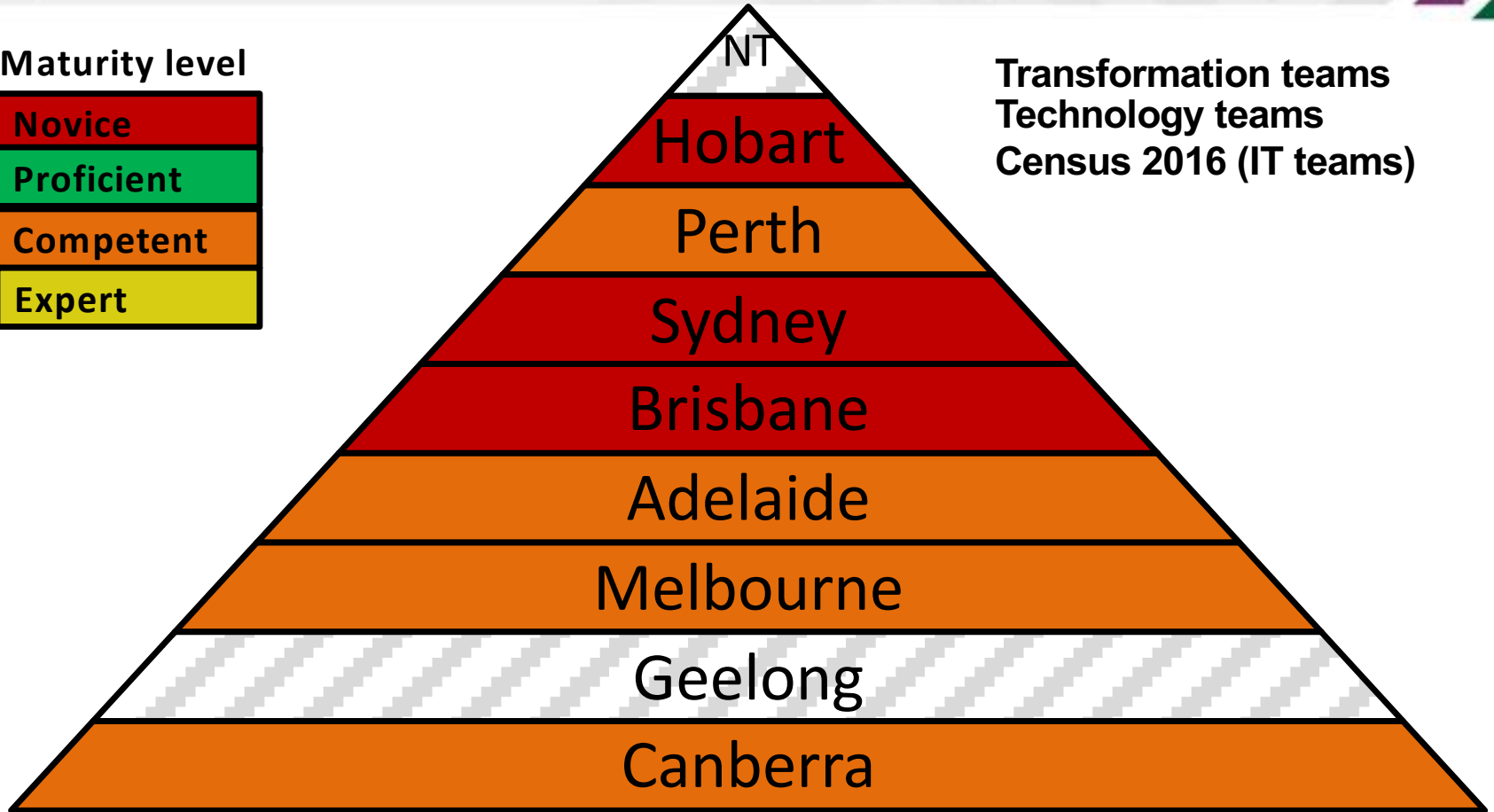
19. ABS agile maturity (2015-2016)



Maturity level

Novice
Proficient
Competent
Expert

Transformation teams
Technology teams
Census 2016 (IT teams)



20. ABS agile maturity (2017-2018)



Maturity level

Novice
Proficient
Competent
Expert

NT

Hobart

Perth

Sydney

Brisbane

Adelaide

Melbourne

Geelong

Canberra

Transformation teams
Technology teams

Census 2016 (IT teams)
Census 2021 Program

60% Business as usual teams
Marriage Survey

National Data Acquisition Centre

21. ABS agile maturity (2020)



Maturity level

Novice
Proficient
Competent
Expert

NT

Hobart

Perth

Sydney

Brisbane

Adelaide

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Geelong

Canberra

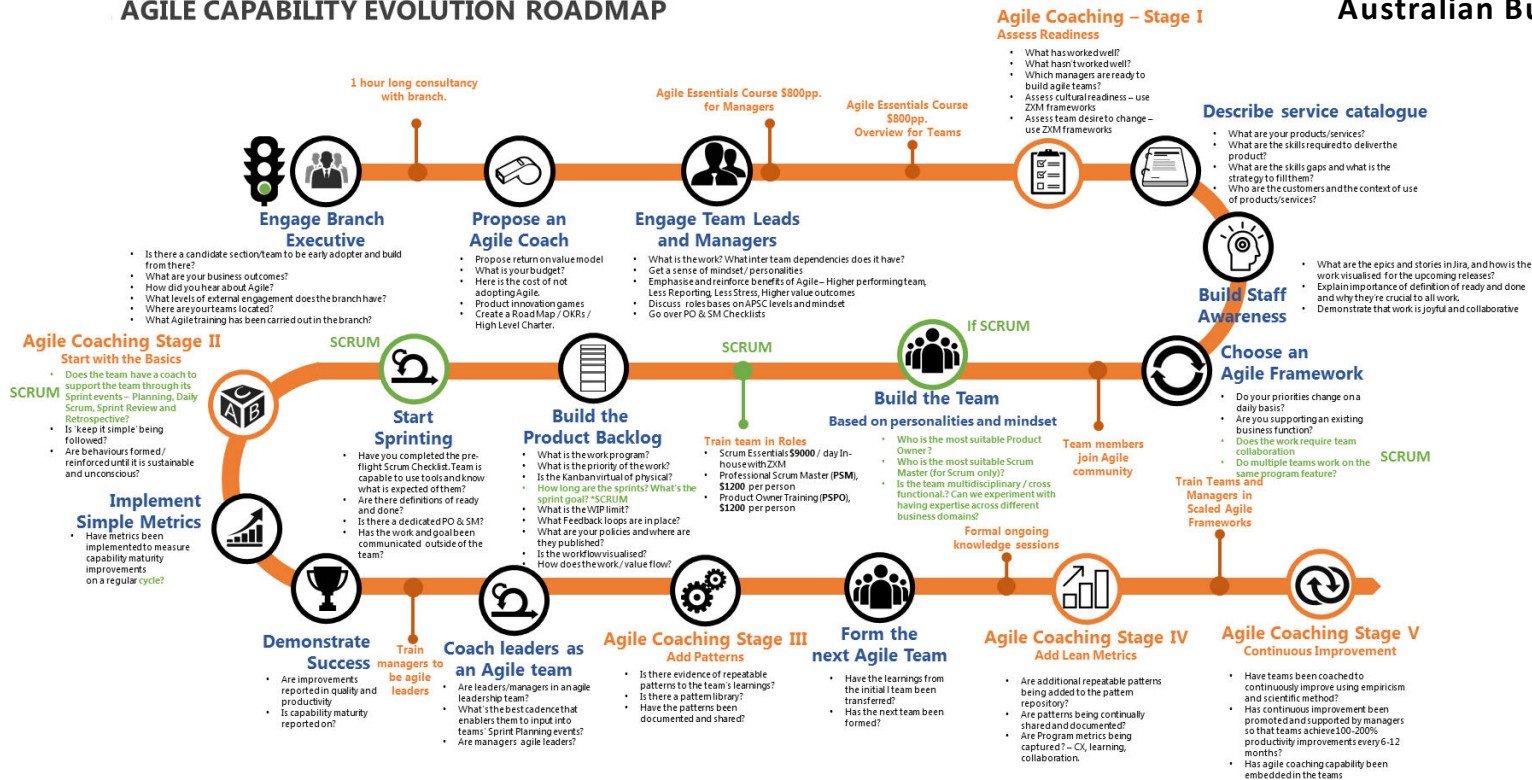
80% of enterprise is agile
(Australian Bureau of Statistics)

22. Engaging with business teams



Juliet Fallace
Australian Bureau of Statistics

AGILE CAPABILITY EVOLUTION ROADMAP



23. Take home messages



Adopt pragmatic approaches

Start small with 1-2 teams

Increase use of Kanban boards

Build baseline agile literacy

Commit to learning
and improving

Adopt stand-ups

Celebrate success



Thank you

Questions

Email: juliet.fallace@abs.gov.au

