

The Treasury
Measuring What Matters Consultation
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Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance Submission to the Measuring What Matters Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission.

The Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance (ADIA) is a shared initiative with over 500 business, government, academic and community organisations working together to accelerate action on digital inclusion. Our member organisations conduct a variety of research and practical programs aimed at reducing the digital divide and enabling greater social and economic participation for all Australians. The ADIA is supported by Infoxchange, Google and Telstra. Australia Post was also a founding partner.

The ADIA's vision is to build a digitally inclusive Australia where everyone is equipped to fully participate in the economy and society. Being digitally included means a person has:

- Affordable access to quality internet and appropriate devices.
- Access to inclusively designed online content, that's readable and accessible, including if they are differently abled or from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- The knowledge, ability, skills and confidence to complete tasks safely and securely online.

The 2023-24 Budget provides the opportunity for the Albanese Government to incorporate digital inclusion into the proposed Measuring What Matters Statement. We would encourage the inclusion of an indicator – or set of indicators – focused on digital inclusion.

This is important as digital technologies – and the ability to confidently and safely use them – are required for all Australians in contemporary society. This includes being able to access essential services such as health, education and the myriad government services accessible online, along with finding and undertaking employment, as well as being socially connected.

While many people are benefitting from the increased role technology is playing in society, many Australians are digitally excluded, lacking affordable connectivity, the ability, or devices to utilise technology.

According to the latest Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) data, 17% of the national population remains digitally excluded¹. Some of the most digitally excluded are seniors, people who live in rural

¹ Australian Digital Inclusion Index, 2021, *Measuring Australia's Digital Divide Australian Digital Inclusion Index: 2021*

and remote Australia, First Nations Australians, people with a disability, and people vulnerable across income and employment. Not only is this an issue now, if we don't address this for all, including children and young people, then there is a longer-term impact of lack of access to services and employment resulting in fewer opportunities and lower life outcomes.

We know that digital technology has the potential to significantly improve Australia's productivity. Almost all jobs in contemporary society require a basic level of digital skills: aged care workers use digital interfaces to track residents' medication; paint factory workers use technology solutions to create particular paint colours; and customer service staff in fast food retailers log orders through wholly digitised systems. Even basic administrative tasks such as completing timesheets or applying for leave require the ability to operate a device, access the internet, and log on to a platform securely. These are just a few examples.

At the other end of the spectrum, to access well paying, secure jobs, digital ability is essential; and in the case of highly skilled technical jobs, digital ability is necessary grounding to build the technical skills required. Lack of digital ability is a barrier to entry to tech job pathways. Unless we address this, we don't expand the pool of people available to work in tech sector jobs. Something that is critical to reaching the goal shared by Government and industry, of creating 1.2 million tech sector jobs by 2030.

It has been reported that 26% of Australian business leaders consider their employees' digital ability to be out of date.² Businesses are experiencing shortages in digitally able workers. The 2022 Salesforce Global Digital Skills Index 2022,³ finds that 26% of employees consider they are very prepared with workplace digital skills, compared with 40% globally; 17% are equipped with the resources to learn these skills, compared with 27% globally; and 12% are actively learning/training on digital skills, compared with 26% globally.⁴

As well as improving financial outcomes, we have the opportunity to improve Australia's digital quality of life to ensure better access and participation for all Australians. According to the 2021 Digital Quality of Life Index⁵ – which measures the impact of internet affordability, internet quality, e-infrastructure, e-security, and e-government – Australia is currently ranked 17th out of 110 countries, behind the US, China, Japan, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and others.

By prioritising digital inclusion in the Measuring What Matters Statement in the upcoming Federal Budget, the Government can accelerate the pathway to digital inclusion for all Australians. This we know is a necessary part of everyday life in contemporary society, and imperative for full

² In a survey of 413 Australian business leaders fielded by Ipsos in November 2021 for RMIT Online and Deloitte Access Economics, 26% of leaders reported their employees' digital literacy skills are out of date (22).

³ <https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/inspiration/resources/salesforce-global-digital-skills-index-2022>

⁴ <https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/inspiration/resources/salesforce-global-digital-skills-index-2022>

⁵ <https://surfshark.com/dql2022>

participation in the economy and society. Increased digital inclusion right across Australian society can yield positive economic outcomes, increase productivity, and help lift people out of poverty.

Thank you for your consideration of our submission. We would be pleased to discuss these matters with you further.

Yours faithfully,



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