



NAVIGATING THE DIGITAL FRONTIER: A
JOURNEY OF INCLUSIVE INNOVATION AND
SOCIAL GOOD

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Australia's digital scene is evolving with a focus on social impact ventures, buoyed by high internet access and government support. Challenges like the digital divide remain, but strategies like universal internet access and digital literacy programs are recommended to ensure inclusive digital growth and societal equity.

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How would you describe the digital trends in your country, especially regarding digital social impact ventures?

Since starting as the national expert of WSA Australia in 2017, I have noticed a rapid paradigm shift in how technology is used for the societal and environmental good. Not so long ago, we learned to isolate technology from business, but today, it is the same. If businesses create economies, technology is then the

neural network of the economy. I have noticed over a period how startups are increasingly identifying the need to be better aligned with their social impact thesis. This trend encourages them to rearticulate the purpose of their business in a more socially acceptable narrative, even though the initial reason for starting the business was different, such as for profit, being their own leader or getting away from the rat race. Therefore, the traditional for-profit mindset has evolved into a profit-for-purpose approach in today's context.

The landscape for digital social impact ventures in Australia is being shaped by several key trends and frameworks reflective of broader societal, environmental, and technological shifts. High internet penetration in Australia can be seen as a main characteristic of the country's digital landscape. Access to and use of broadband and mobile internet, as well as social media platforms, are testaments to the culture of technological adaptation in Australia.

Australia, historically, is considered an innovator and an early adopter of new technologies. The country was the first to develop and patent WLAN (wireless LAN) technology in the early 1990's. Australian radio-astronomer Dr John O'Sullivan and his colleagues at CSIRO are credited with inventing WiFi, as their work laid the foundation for the wireless networking technology now used in billions of devices worldwide, revolutionising how we communicate.¹ The Australian government, too, is proactive in promoting digital transformation in all economic activities, boosting economic activities that drive innovation and competitiveness while addressing social challenges. Implementing the national broadband network (NBN) in 2009

¹ Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (2024). Bringing WiFi to the world. [Online] Access at: <https://www.csiro.au/en/research/technology-space/it/wireless-lan>

was a significant milestone in the country's digital history.² With the introduction of NBN, the government aimed to provide high-speed internet access across the nation, targeting both urban and rural areas, to bridge the digital divide. Over the years, the country has released various strategies to enhance its digital economy. The "Digital Economy Strategy 2022" outlines updated plans to invest in digital infrastructure, skills, and regulations to ensure the whole nation benefits from digital transformation over the next decade. The vision of this strategy is for the country to become one of the top ten digital economies and societies by the year 2030. Some of the key highlights of this plan includes³:

- USD 1 billion for the technology investment boost
- USD 70 million to establish a quantum commercialisation hub
- USD 22.6 million to further support 5G innovation
- USD 3.9 million for helping women transition mid-career to digital workforce
- Reforming Australia's payment system for the digital age
- Keeping Australians safe and secure online

Australia's current digital landscape

- *High Internet Penetration:* The Australian Bureau of Statistics shows an 88 per cent proportion of households with internet access with a steady climb in 2018. 91 per cent of these households use desktops and laptops, and

2 Knezevic, E. (2016). National Broadband Network. [Online] Access at: https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/NationalBroadbandNetwork

3 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Australian Government, (2022). Digital Economy Strategy 2022 Update Released [Online] Access at: <https://www.pmc.gov.au/news/digital-economy-strategy-2022-update-released>

91 per cent use smartphones. Internet usage is, therefore, high across demographics, with a significant portion of the population having access to the internet at home.⁴

- *Innovation and Startups*: Australia has a vibrant startup ecosystem supported by many government initiatives. Cities like Sydney and Melbourne are recognised as significant tech startup hubs, fostering innovation in FinTech, MedTech and AgriTech, among others. The Australian Trade and Investment Commission shows heightened confidence in the startup landscape by recording 70 deals in the first quarter of 2022. The country also ranks number 1 in honing skills for using, adopting, and adapting frontier technologies.⁵
- *Digital Inclusion and Accessibility*: the Australian Digital Inclusion Index has been set up to measure and address digital access and literacy gaps across different population groups, aiming to ensure equitable participation in the digital economy.⁶

We find great examples of this from this year's WSA Winners from Australia. The *Early Language and Literacy Developmental Index (ELLDI)* by the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation is a ground-breaking tool addressing early learning gaps, especially among vulnerable groups during crucial pre-school years. This innovation provides parents, carers, and educators with evidence-based insights into children's early

4 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018). Household use of information technology. [Online] Access at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/technology-and-innovation>

5 Australian Trade and Innovation Commission (2024). Startups and Innovation in Australia. [Online] Access at: <https://www.globalaustralia.gov.au/why-australia/innovation-australia>

6 Australian Digital Inclusion Index (2024) Measuring Australia's Digital Divide. [Online] Access at: <https://www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au/>

language and literacy development from 2-8 years, accompanied by recommended targeted learning strategies. By blending a validated progression scale with an accessible digital interface, *ELLDI* facilitates seamless observation gathering, feedback, and engagement among teachers and educators. The tool is globally scalable, and the Australian Council for Education Research has validated the index against multiple longitudinal datasets. It has recognised the index as a particularly unique service to children aged 2-5 years.⁷

Vacayit is revolutionising how the travel industry approaches marketing, transforming it into a more inclusive and accessible experience. By addressing the overly visual-centric nature of tourism marketing and the lack of available accessibility information, *Vacayit* opens the world of travel to those who are blind or have low vision. Through partnerships with tourism operators, *Vacayit* crafts audio guides that vividly describe travel experiences, ensuring that travel is an accessible adventure for everyone. Standing out from the competition, *Vacayit*'s innovative B2B model embraces the richness of all sensory experiences, not merely relying on visual impressions, thereby making travel truly inclusive and welcoming for all.

- Digital Health Initiatives: Introducing “My Health Record” saw an initiative like no other where an online summary of an individual’s health information was made available securely at the fingertips of providers and patients.⁸

WSA Winner, *Risk of Hospitalisation Module by PenCS* addresses Australia’s healthcare crisis of 7,48,000 annual preventable hospitalisations costing over USD 2.4 billion. By emphasising

7 WSA Australia (2024) Australian Winners. [Online] Access at: <https://worldsummitawardsaustralia.com/wsa-winners-from-australia/>

8 Digital Health Government Australia [2024] Connecting Australia to a healthier future. [Online] Access at: <https://www.digitalhealth.gov.au/>

preventive care over hospital treatment, it aims to transform healthcare for a sustainable future. The module aids providers in identifying at-risk patients, ensuring timely recalls to General Practices or Aboriginal Medical Services clinics, and aligning with quality improvement programs. This approach is critical, especially with a projected GP shortage of 9,298 by 2030, ensuring marginalised communities retain access to essential care. *Risk of Hospitalisation Module by PenCS* is a visionary step towards fostering health equity and reducing healthcare disparities in Australia.

Other trends driving Australians are setting up startups and organisations and their work around sustainability and social good. Purchases made considering social and environmental responsibilities, banning single-use plastics, and being aware of the social and economic impact made by an individual's actions are some of the obvious trends in the Australian ecosystem. These trends and frameworks illustrate Australia's complex but increasingly structured landscape for digital social impact ventures. Organisations are being pushed to think beyond traditional models of growth and impact, focusing instead on creating value that aligns with societal expectations and addresses systemic challenges.

How would you describe recent digital shifts in your country?

In the digital media space, there's been an evolution towards more interactive and immersive experiences, as seen with the rise of the metaverse. The Deloitte Insights 2022 Digital Media Trends survey indicates that traditional streaming video-on-demand (SVOD) services are facing challenges in retaining subscribers amidst a landscape where social media and gaming platforms offer more personalised, social, and immersive experiences. Younger generations, in particular, are gravitating towards these platforms, which seamlessly integrate entertainment, community, and commerce. This

trend underscores the growing importance of interactivity and community in digital media consumption, challenging traditional passive consumption models and suggesting a future where entertainment is increasingly social and participatory.⁹

Moreover, sustainability is becoming a crucial factor in consumer decisions, with a significant majority willing to pay more for sustainably produced goods. This trend reflects a growing consumer awareness of the impact of their purchasing decisions on the environment and society and a willingness to align their spending with their values.¹⁰ These shifts highlight a broader trend towards digital transformation, characterised by more direct engagement between brands and consumers, the integration of digital experiences into everyday life, and an increasing consumer consciousness about sustainability and community. Brands and media companies are thus challenged to adapt to these evolving consumer expectations, leveraging technology to create more personalised, immersive, and sustainable offerings.

In exploring the recent digital shifts in Australia, it's also important to go back a few years to a period which marked remarkable transitions from the early stages of broadband internet to a highly connected, digital-first society embracing advanced technologies like AI, IoT, and 5G. I have explored the digital landscape from 2004 to 2024 below, which involved a significant shift in technology adoption, infrastructure development and digital culture.

2004-2009- *The Broadband Era Begins in Australia:* In 2004,

9 Westcott, K. et al. (2022) Digital media trends, 16th edition: Toward the metaverse. [Online] Access at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/technology/digital-media-trends-consumption-habits-survey/summary.html>

10 Durand-Hayes, S. (2023) Decision Points: Sharpening the Pre-Purchase consumer experience. [Online] Access at: <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/industries/consumer-markets/consumer-insights-survey.html>

Australia was in the early stages of broadband internet adoption, where the focus was on transitioning from dial-up connections to more reliable and faster broadband services, primarily through ADSL technology. However, digital divide concerns were brewing due to significant disparities in internet access and digital literacy between urban and rural areas, as well as different socioeconomic groups. With the intervention of the Australian government, more services were offered online, aiming to improve efficiency and accessibility. However, as these initiatives were still in their infancy, and digital interaction with the government was limited, the digital divide continued into the next decade.¹¹

2010-2014- *Digital Expansion and the Rise of the NBN:* The initial rollout of the National Broadband Network marked a pivotal shift towards improving nationwide internet access. With this ambitious infrastructure project, the government aimed to provide high-speed internet to the majority of Australian homes and businesses.¹² With an increased number of Australians having access to NBN, a significant increase in smartphone adoption was seen, changing how Australians accessed the internet and consumed media. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram became central to digital communication and content sharing.¹³

2015-2019- *Digital Transformation and Innovation:* Australia saw a rapid digital transformation across many business sectors between 2015 and 2019 when organisations embraced digital transformation, leveraging cloud computing, big data

11 Australian Government Digital Transformation Agency (2024) Digital transformations. [Online] Access at: <https://www.dta.gov.au/>

12 Knezevic, E. (2016). National Broadband Network. [Online] Access at: https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/NationalBroadbandNetwork

13 O'Mahony, J. (2022). Mobile Nation 2022 - 5G Unleashed. [Online] Access at: <https://www.deloitte.com/au/en/services/economics/perspectives/mobile-nation.html>

analytics, and online platforms to innovate and improve customer experiences. With the growth of the digital economy, cybersecurity became a national priority. Initiatives aimed to protect critical infrastructure, businesses, and individuals from increasing cyber threats.¹⁴ The same period saw a rise in the FinTech and HealthTech sectors, which were driven by digital innovation. Australia saw the emergence of successful startups and innovations in digital payments, online banking, telehealth, and digital health records.¹⁵

2020-2024- Advanced Technologies and Digital Inclusion: The pandemic accelerated digital adoption, introducing widespread remote work, eCommerce, telehealth, and online education. This period showed Australians the critical role of digital infrastructure and connectivity. Similarly, the widespread deployment of 5G networks, along with advancements in AI and IoT, opened new possibilities for smart cities, advanced manufacturing, and personalised digital services.¹⁶ Efforts intensified to bridge the digital divide, with programs aimed at ensuring equitable access to digital technology and literacy across all societal segments.¹⁷

The above 20-year journey reflects Australia's transformation through the digital age, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities a country is presented with by rapid technological advancements. From Infrastructure transitions such as 5G and

14 Brangwin, N. (2016). National Security - Cybersecurity. [Online] Access at: <https://www.aph.gov.au/Cybersecurity>

15 Digital Health Government Australia [2024] Connecting Australia to a healthier future. [Online] Access at: <https://www.digitalhealth.gov.au/>

16 Fox, B., et. al. (2024). Developing and adopting AI. [Online] Access at: <https://www.industry.gov.au/science-technology-and-innovation>

17 The Treasury, Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance (2023). Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance Submission to the Measuring What Matters Consultation. [Online] Access at: https://treasury.gov.au/australian_digital_inclusion_alliance.pdf

NBN to creating an accessible digital economy and positive societal impact to technology adoption that saw individuals moving from web browsing to basic online services to the integration of AI, IoT and 5G Technologies have fundamentally changed how Australians live, work, and interact.

Describe and provide insight into whether your country is democratic or the internet is breaking democracy in your body politic.

Australia's democracy is seen through a lens of both respect and criticism, with various opinion leaders highlighting different aspects that they believe need reform or attention.

For instance, a series of perspectives shared by individuals in an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* paints a complex picture of the challenges facing Australian democracy. These range from the effects of privatisation and the role of media to systemic issues within the parliamentary system and the influence of social media on political discourse. David Fist, for instance, points out the negative impact of a rapid news cycle and how it affects politicians' ability to change their minds or evolve their positions. Scoppo discusses the drawbacks of extensive privatisation, leading to a sense that government effectiveness is diminished. Lucas touches on societal wealth and inequality, highlighting the paradoxes in how wealth is generated and distributed. Necia Merrells and Greg Thomas critique the parliamentary system, suggesting that career politicians and the preferential voting system serve party interests over those of the wider population. Andrew Lockwood raises concerns about the impact of social media on civil discourse, while Kevin O'Connor criticises the opaque and adversarial nature of party politics¹⁸

¹⁸ Mendelsohn, S, (2018). We asked if and how Australia's democracy was broken. This is what you said. *Sydney Morning Herald*. [Online] Access at: <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/we-asked-if-and-how-you-thought-australia-s->

Tom Gerald Daly, in an article published by the University of Melbourne, reflects on the challenges faced by Australian democracy in recent times, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Daly notes the erosion of democratic engagement and the stagnation of long-term democratic reforms such as the Federal Integrity Commission and increased Indigenous involvement in policy making. The article underscores the urgent need for democratic renewal in Australia, amidst challenges intensified by the pandemic and the evolving global political landscape.¹⁹

Further supporting these viewpoints, the Lowy Institute Poll 2019 reveals interesting statistics about Australians' attitudes towards democracy. The poll indicates that while a stable 65 per cent of Australians affirm that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government, a notable proportion of the population, particularly younger Australians, express ambivalence towards democracy. This data suggests a generational shift in attitudes, with younger Australians showing a greater openness to non-democratic forms of government under certain circumstances. The poll also finds that despite the political tumult of recent years, a significant majority of Australians remain satisfied with how democracy functions in the country, highlighting a complex relationship between discontent with specific aspects of the political system and overall support for democratic governance.²⁰

These insights collectively underline the multifaceted challenges and evolving perceptions of democracy in Australia, emphasising a pressing need for political and systemic reforms

democracy-was-broken-this-is-what-you-said-20180403-p4z7kz.html

19 Daly, G. (2021) Australia Needs a Democracy Fix. University of Melbourne. [Online] Access at: <https://www.australia-needs-a-democracy-fix>

20 Lowy Institute Poll (2019) Democracy. [Online] Access at: <https://lowyinstitutepoll.lowyinstitute.org/themes/democracy/>

to address public dissatisfaction and enhance democratic integrity and effectiveness.

Digital Tools are considered to be empowering. Can you describe which sector in your country has been helped by the digital most?

Digital tools have significantly transformed various sectors in Australia, enhancing efficiency, productivity, and accessibility. As discussed under questions 1 and 2, their impact varies across different sectors, including the corporate/private sector, government, and the general public. As in any yin and yang situation, with benefits come potential drawbacks. These are discussed below, especially those concerning democracy:

Corporate/Private Sector: Digital platforms have revolutionised the retail sector, enabling businesses to reach a wider audience using eCommerce. Major Supermarkets like Woolworths and Coles have adopted digital tools for online shopping, inventory management, self-checkout, and customer service, improving sales and customer experiences. However, the dominance of large online retailers can disadvantage smaller businesses, potentially reducing market diversity and competitive pricing. Fintech innovations have reshaped banking, investment, and insurance services. Digital tools have introduced mobile banking, online trading platforms, and personalised financial advice through AI, making services more accessible and efficient for consumers. However, the digital divide and cybersecurity risks could potentially disenfranchise some users and expose them to financial crimes.

Government/Public Services: The introduction of digital health records and telehealth services, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, has improved patient care and service delivery efficiency. Digital tools in healthcare have facilitated remote consultations, improved data management, and supported research. Nevertheless, data privacy and security issues remain

concerns for citizens' rights. Digital platforms have expanded access to education through online courses, digital textbooks, and virtual classrooms, benefiting students and educators alike. However, the digital divide becomes apparent here, potentially widening the gap between those with and without access to digital tools and reliable internet connections, affecting educational equality.

General Public/Consumer Impact: Digital tools have democratised access to information, enabling more people to stay informed, communicate, and participate in social and political discussions. Social media platforms, online news outlets, and forums have played crucial roles. However, the spread of misinformation, echo chambers, and cyberbullying through these platforms can be detrimental to public discourse and democracy. Digital tools have empowered individuals and groups to mobilise for social, environmental, and political causes. Online petitions, social media campaigns, and crowdfunding for causes have seen significant successes. However, digital surveillance and data collection by governments and corporations pose risks to privacy and freedom of expression.

Potential Disempowerment and Negative Impacts on Democracy; while digital tools offer numerous benefits, they also pose challenges to democracy and society, including:

- *Privacy and Surveillance:* Increased digital surveillance by governments and corporations threatens individual privacy rights and freedom.
- *Misinformation and Polarisation:* The proliferation of misinformation on digital platforms can undermine public trust in institutions and polarise communities.
- *Digital Divide:* The gap between those with access to digital technologies and those without can exacerbate social inequalities, leaving some populations disadvantaged in

accessing information, services, and opportunities.

While digital tools have broadly empowered various sectors in Australia, enhancing efficiency, inclusivity, and participation, they also present challenges that need to be addressed to safeguard democratic values and ensure equitable benefits for all citizens.

What are the biggest challenges in your country in terms of digital transformation?

Australia's journey towards digital transformation presents several significant challenges, many of which mirror those faced globally but are also unique due to its specific economic, geographic, and demographic context. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that touches on aspects of infrastructure, education, policy, and societal engagement. Most pressing challenges are:

- *Digital Divide:* Australia's vast and varied geography poses a unique challenge to digital accessibility. Rural and remote areas often struggle with inadequate internet connectivity, which hampers access to digital services and opportunities. Similarly, economic disparities contribute to the digital divide when considering socioeconomic factors. Lower-income households may not be able to afford the necessary technology or internet access, limiting their participation in the digital economy. Moreover, there is a notable gap in digital literacy across different age groups, with older Australians being particularly vulnerable. This group is at risk of being left behind as services and essential information migrate online.
- *Infrastructure and Connectivity:* Despite improvements, some areas, particularly rural and remote regions, still lack high-speed internet access. The National Broadband Network (NBN) aims to address this, but challenges

remain in ensuring equitable, high-quality access for all. The deployment of 5G technology is critical for future digital initiatives, but it requires significant investment in infrastructure and spectrum allocation, posing challenges in timely and equitable implementation.

- *Digital Literacy and Skills:* Ensuring that the workforce possesses the necessary digital skills is crucial for Australia's economic future. This includes not only technical skills but also digital literacy for safely and effectively navigating the digital world. Similarly, as technology evolves, so does the need for ongoing education and training. Creating accessible opportunities for lifelong learning is essential to prevent skills obsolescence.
- *Cybersecurity and Privacy:* As digital transformation accelerates, so does the risk of data breaches and cyber-attacks. Strengthening cybersecurity measures and ensuring robust data protection laws are critical to maintaining trust in digital systems. Also, increasing public awareness and understanding of cybersecurity practices is essential to safeguard personal and sensitive information.
- *Government and Public Services:* The major focus for government and public services is digital inclusion. While there has been progress in making government services accessible online, ensuring that these services are inclusive and meet the diverse needs of the population remains a challenge. Similarly, balancing innovation with regulation in rapidly evolving sectors like Fintech, Healthtech, and e-commerce is critical. Regulations must protect consumers and ensure fair competition without stifling innovation.
- *Cultural and Behavioural Change:* Encouraging the adoption of digital technologies by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the broader population can be challenging. This requires overcoming resistance to

change and demonstrating the tangible benefits of digital transformation.

To address these challenges effectively, Australia must focus on comprehensive strategies that include improving infrastructure, enhancing digital literacy, fostering a culture of lifelong learning, ensuring equitable access to technology, and strengthening cybersecurity measures. Collaborative efforts between the government, private sector, and communities are essential to bridging the digital divide and ensuring that the benefits of digital transformation are widely shared.

Does your country consume digital content more than it produces, or vice versa?

Australia's digital content consumption versus production and its media landscape is a multifaceted issue that incorporates various elements such as the availability of information as a public good, support for public media and broadcasters online, linguistic diversity, and the proactive online publication of public information including access to legal and political process documents. In this section, I have explored each aspect to understand the balance between consumption and production of digital content in Australia.

Availability of Information as a Public Good: Australia has a robust infrastructure for the digital distribution of information, with a high level of internet penetration and mobile device usage among its population. This infrastructure supports both the consumption and production of digital content. The Australian government and various institutions make a significant effort to ensure that information, especially regarding public services, health, education, and environmental data, is readily available online as a public good. This suggests a proactive approach towards producing digital content that is valuable for society. Australia's public broadcasters, such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting

Service (SBS), have a strong online presence. These entities not only produce a vast array of digital content ranging from news and current affairs to entertainment and educational programs but also cater to Australia's linguistic diversity by offering content in multiple languages. Their online platforms are instrumental in producing digital content that reflects the nation's cultural and linguistic diversity, ensuring broad access to varied digital content.

Australia is a multicultural society with significant linguistic diversity. Australian digital platforms, especially those of public broadcasters, reflect this diversity by providing content in various languages, thus encouraging both consumption and production of non-English digital content. This approach helps cater to the information needs of non-English speaking communities in Australia, promoting inclusivity in digital content consumption and production.

Proactive Online Publication of Public Information: The Australian government and its various departments are proactive in publishing a wide range of public information online, including legal and political process documents. This transparency ensures that citizens have access to important information, facilitating informed public discourse and participation in the democratic process. The availability of such documents online indicates a significant production of digital content aimed at ensuring accountability and transparency.

Access to Legal and Political Process Documents: Access to legal and political process documents online is crucial for an informed and engaged citizenry. Australia has made strides in making such documents available online through official government websites, legal databases, and platforms dedicated to parliamentary proceedings. This effort indicates a commitment to producing and providing digital content that supports civic engagement and understanding of the legal and

political processes. Overall, Australia has a balanced approach to the consumption and production of digital content. While Australians are avid consumers of digital content, both from domestic and international sources, there is also a significant emphasis on producing digital content that serves public interests, reflects the nation's linguistic and cultural diversity, and promotes transparency and access to information. Public broadcasters and government initiatives play crucial roles in producing digital content, suggesting that Australia is not merely a consumer but also an active producer of digital content aimed at enriching public discourse and democratic participation.

Can you make recommendations on how your country should make digital policies an equaliser?

A multifaceted approach that encompasses access, education, privacy, security, and innovation is necessary to address inequalities and leverage digital policies as an equaliser in Australia. A comprehensive strategy considering these factors can be explored to develop an equaliser as discussed below:

- *Ensure Universal Access to High-Speed Internet:* Make broadband internet access a utility, much like water and electricity. Invest in infrastructure that reaches rural and remote areas, eliminating the digital divide. Subsidise internet access for low-income households to ensure that everyone can afford connectivity.
- *Digital Literacy and Education:* Implement nationwide digital literacy programs starting from primary schools to adult education, focusing on the safe, effective, and ethical use of technology. This includes coding, digital safety, and information literacy to prepare citizens for a digital economy and protect them from misinformation.
- *Support Local Content and Services:* Encourage the

development of local digital content, platforms, and services that cater to Australian interests and values. This could involve grants and support for Australian tech startups, particularly those that aim to solve local issues or promote cultural heritage.

- *Data Privacy and Security Legislation:* Enact robust data protection laws that give individuals control over their personal information, similar to the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This includes the right to access, correct, and delete personal data, as well as strict guidelines and penalties for data breaches.
- *Encourage Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship:* Create a conducive environment for innovation through tax incentives, grants, and incubator programs for tech startups. Focus on sectors where Australia has a competitive advantage or where digital innovation can address local challenges, such as healthcare, agriculture, and renewable energy.
- *Digital Inclusion Programs:* Develop targeted programs for groups traditionally underrepresented in the digital economy, including indigenous communities, people with disabilities, and the elderly. This could involve tailored educational programs, assistive technologies, and community-driven tech solutions.
- *Ethical AI and Technology Policies:* Lead in the ethical development and deployment of AI and emerging technologies. Establish guidelines that prioritise transparency, accountability, and the societal impact of technology. Support research into the social implications of AI and ensure that AI systems are developed and used in ways that are fair and equitable.
- *Public-Private Partnerships:* Foster collaborations between

government, industry, academia, and civil society to tackle digital inequality. Such partnerships can accelerate the deployment of digital infrastructure, drive innovation, and ensure that digital policies are aligned with the public interest.

- *International Collaboration:* Engage in international forums to share knowledge, align on global standards for digital technology, and ensure that Australian interests are represented in global digital policy discussions.
- *Regular Review and Adaptation of Digital Policies:* Establish mechanisms for the ongoing review and adaptation of digital policies to ensure they remain relevant and effective in the face of rapidly evolving technologies and societal needs.

By focusing on these strategies, Australia can harness digital technologies as powerful equalisers, bridging gaps in society, fostering economic growth, and ensuring that all Australians can participate fully in the digital age.

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