

Project Idea:

‘Our Travel’ Australia’s integrated travel tool for the emerging post-pandemic world.

It’s no secret that Australian’s love to travel. Whether it’s a trip to the beach, a trip to your mates or a trip over state and international borders, Australian’s are always on the go. According to Austrade statistics, prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the intense bushfire season in early 2020, there were 109 million domestic overnight trips in Australia in the year ending March 2019. Travel and health restrictions have brought Australian industries to their knees, which is why promoting domestic tourism has been a key focus for State and Federal Governments as a way of securing our Economic recovery. That is why *Our Travel* aims to bridge a capability gap in Australia, by linking all State Travel Cards to a singular app, whilst also featuring an integrated Australia-wide check-in app and a Vaccine Passport to make travel easier and safer for everyone.

COVID-19 has drastically changed how, when and why we can travel. Technology has been our saving grace, playing an integral part in public safety more than ever before. The development of mandatory check-in apps and digital vaccination certificates have provided an element of security against an invisible enemy. The Federal Government have outlined that these digital tools are key to the easing of restrictions and re-introduction of freedoms. Given the siloing of track and trace capabilities through State Government structures, the sheer number of cross-border communities and Australia’s desire to travel given nearly two years of restricted movement, I believe that not having a nation-wide travel and check-in application is detrimental to our ability to sustain federated travel into the future. Irrespective of how we are currently handling the COVID-19 situation, structures need to be implemented now to mitigate similar infectious diseases in the future.

The Product

Our Travel has two main goals. To help keep Australian’s safe and to help keep Australian’s free. It aims to do this by providing a single reference point for Check-In, Public Transport and proof of Vaccination irrespective of where you are in Australia.

There are currently eight different Check-In apps and Travel Cards (*see figure one below*)

State/Territory	Check-In App	Travel Card
New South Wales	Service NSW	Opal Card
Victoria	Service Victoria	MyKi Card
Queensland	Check In Qld	Go Card
South Australia	COVID SAsafe	metroCARD
Western Australia	SafeWA	SmartRider
Tasmania	Check in TAS	Greencard
Australian Capital Territory	Check In CBR	MyWay
Northern Territory	The Territory Check In	Tap and Ride

Figure One: State/Territory matched with their check-in and travel card service

Given the challenges posed by COVID-19, travel and Check-In services are synonymous. A singular integrated system benefits all relevant stakeholders, the respective Governments and the population of Australia. Having eight siloed State services in the current environment is grossly

inefficient and inconvenient. Given the communicability of this virus, community compliance is one of the greatest factors in keeping the population safe. Ensuring that use of technology is intuitive, simple and accessible are crucial to community well-being.

Having a singular Check-In app makes it easier to track and verify where individuals have travelled across state-borders. This is particularly important for people who regularly travel interstate for work, members of border communities and people who might travel through various states for tourism purposes. This benefits individuals as they will not need to use multiple applications when travelling and assists authorities that may need to engage in contact tracing.

Having a nation-wide travel card simplifies travel for cross border communities by reducing the amount of services they need for travel. Rather than having to maintain different platforms for each state, this would all be amalgamated into a single application for ease of use. This also has benefits when it comes to tourism as people from different states will no longer need to set up another service for a temporary stay.

The app is called *Our Travel* because 'we are one and we are many.' *Our Travel* signifies our journey as a nation; whether you realise or not, when you travel and holiday domestically, your journey is entwined with the journey of others. Only together as united communities and a country can we overcome the challenges posed by COVID-19.

How will it work?

- 1) Users will download the *Our Travel* app onto their portable device
- 2) They will then need to create a profile consisting of basic data:

First Name

Last Name

Mobile Number

Email Address

Post Code (*to assist in contract tracing if infected or suspected of infection*)

Link Proof of Vaccination (*optional*)

- 3) If people qualify for discounted travel (*i.e. students, veterans' or pensioners*) they will need to upload documentation proving this, as they would need to in any other circumstance.
- 4) Link a bank account to the *Your Travel* app (*optional*) for automatic topping up of travel balance.
- 5) Check-In functionality will be QR code based. (*Businesses and other entities will have the ability to create QR codes as needed for people to check in to*).
- 6) Electronic Travel Card function will be configured to co-exist with existing infrastructure in Australia, to ensure ease of use.

For people without smartphones:

- 1) You will need to go online or into a state service provider to create and complete steps 1 – 4 as outlined above.
- 2) Once this has been completed you will receive a physical card that will provide you access to the functions outlined in 5 – 6

Tools and Technologies:

The software would need to be compatible with iOS and Android operating systems, as Apple and Samsung develop and sell the most popular personal devices. Applications would be written using programming languages such as Swift (used by Apple) and Java (used by Android).

Hardware requirements would mainly be centred around developer and application support needs. As such the main hardware requirements would be computers to code and a server to host the application. The exception to this would be the PVC needed to make the physical cards for those who do not sufficient technology to support the app. Given there is physical component to this project, manufacturing capability needs to be considered. We would have to engage a company to source the raw material and produce cards that can then be coded.

Skills Required:

Given that these products exist in the real world today, it would be highly feasible to find people with the relevant skillsets. I identified a few skill sets that we would need:

Marketing Experts – to assist in product rollout

Software Developers – to build the app and calibrate it to work with other existing platforms

Cyber Security Experts – to ensure that the app is secure and trustworthy

Project Managers – to oversee the project through its the design, creation and rollout phases

Server Administrators – to oversee server maintenance and function

Policy Advisors – to assist in helping identify and overcome any challenges that may occur

Lawyers – to ensure the legality of the app

Manufacturer – to create the physical cards for non-digitalised users.

Outcome:

Success is when more people are checking in, contract tracing is faster, border communities are punished less for the geographical location and when there is proof that Government Services can be developed effectively to meet the needs of an increasingly digitalised society, without compromising their duty to those who do not have ready access to digital services.

I would hope that this app would greatly contribute to keeping people safe and remove the hassle of needing to interact with multiple systems when carrying out related tasks, such as going to the shop via public transport. I would hope that it make the lives of people living in border communities easier and that it paves the way for the future development and integration of Government Services.