Digital Economy Strategy (https://consult.industry.gov.au/portfolio-policy-and-innovation-strategy/the-digital-economy/)

Response 472669193

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Introduction

Are you lodging a submission on behalf of an organisation?

Please select one item

◯ Yes

◯ No

What is your organisation?

Organisation

> Paul Buckby

Provide a comment

1. The digital economy

> To build a strong digital economy, we need a strong layer of digital skills underneath that economy. Coding is a massive part of those skills. It is good that we as a country are looking to teach our school kids coding, however they will be another decade before they are in the workforce. We are also ignoring the people 20yrs+ who have up to 45years of work left and do not have those skills. Two of Australia's current significant problems are: a) Australia has a shortage of software developers and analysts as shown by the Department of Immigration's report on the number of 457 visas granted since 2014. The 'Software and Applications Programmers' category is the highest being more than double the next category, with other software related skillsets also featuring highly in the

visas allocated. We're importing our skills as we don't have enough here. Australia is also trying to grow quickly in the digital and entrepreneurial space however it does not have a sufficient underlying core of local skills to support it's current status. b) The parliamentary 2017 report "Inquiry into innovation and creativity: workforce for the new economy", highlights the need for an adaptable workforce that constantly needs to update their skills. The CEDA 2015 report famously highlighted that up to 40% of jobs may not exist in another 10-15 years' time. Our current workers need to upskill, as many of their jobs will require these new skills or perhaps the jobs will not exist at all. Gaining these skills for adults has many barriers. There is nothing between one day workshops or weekend courses and degrees or diplomas for adults to build these coding skills. Because the adults have mortgages, families, study debts, as well as the many single parents having little or no spare time the barriers to long-term study are high. Studying a degree part-time over the most part of a decade does not help in a digital world which is changing much faster than that. We are running a program on Saturdays 10-4pm x 8 weeks x 3 programs for free that teaches coding skills. Over the 24 weeks, the adults can build on their skills and learn the core coding concepts. We are finding they are using these new skills in their current work or are looking to continue on learning with online or other study. Our program is face-to-face and many who come have tried online study themselves but without the core foundation concepts, the failure rate is massive, hence their eagerness to enter our program. We have done this with no funding but are having to scale the program back now in order to work ourselves. With virtually no advertising, we have always been heavily over-subscribed and have women as the majority of our participants. Many say they could not have afforded to have paid for a course. The participants want this to continue but without backing we cannot. We also have many professionals, underemployed, unemployed, uni students, admin workers and others participating and learning off each other as well as us. This is the sort of grassroots program making a real difference to people's lives that should be funded to help Australia build its digital economy.

4. Empowering all Australians through digital skills and inclusion

see earlier comments. Most of our participants are aged 20's through to late 30's with then numbers in their 40's and 50's dropping off. They know they need these skills to remain employable int he future. With many having financial and attendance barriers to 'traditional' study and failing to succeed in online study, shorter government back programs like ours provide real skills quickly to people who are hungry for them. Without this sort of program , these people miss out and will be digitally poor and at risk of becoming dependent on the government for their living.

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