

17 November 2017

Response to the Digital Economy: Opening up the Conversation

I offer this brief response as an individual who is concerned that only the views of business and industry, or those early adopters enthusiastic to adopt everything digital, may dominate what shape and form Australia's digital economic strategy may take. It would mean, then, that the will of business and commerce would be imposed on every individual.

As people, unfortunately, must 'finance' their lives — since everything costs, even death — what is decided for the economy will infiltrate every aspect of human life — and that impact may *not* be positive.

This response does not attempt to address every question posed, but simply provides an individual's view of what worries them about going 'gung-ho' into a digital world without careful thought, but just because "the rest of the world" — the "singularity" vision of America — dominates, and if we don't keep up we will be "left behind".

The three aspects of most concern are these:

- 1) Adoption and use of digital technologies
- 2) The digital infrastructure needed to support the new technologies
- 3) The issues of trust, confidence, security.

With regard to these three matters, please consider the following comments:

- **Exercise of balance** –

While emphasis is always given to "competition", "innovation" and "productivity", please don't forget that this should be balanced with human health, social, cultural, religious or spiritual aspirations. Not everyone feels "empowered" by technology, and not everyone thinks AI is the answer to our problems. Careful thought and public debate should be applied to define agreed boundaries. Please do not overlook human values (eg. human communing face-to-face; entertainment/theatre with live actors using their God-given talents; human healers-carers-helpers-service attendants; real, technology-free nature settings and wildernesses etc). There are too many references to quote in support of these comments, but one close to home is:
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/boverlectures/>.

- **Choice** –

Please do not impose "one solution only" for all people. Not everyone wishes to be connected to the Internet of Things. Not everyone wants online services only. Consideration needs to be given to people at all life-stages, different values, different socio-economic status. For example, not all people in their 70s, 80s and 90s want a computer or portable digital device or internet connection, and do not want to be forced to do all business (including social service transactions **or tax returns**) on line. Telecommunication and internet costs, including the costs of ongoing **hardware and** application upgrades forced on individuals because certain platforms are no longer supported, will exclude many poorer people and the elderly.

- **Safety –**

The safety of human beings and all of nature is important and should not be compromised because of greed. A healthy biosphere is essential to life and health. Despite widespread **denial** and ignorance of the impact of electro-magnetic-radiation, there are serious concerns about **the** safety of the digital infrastructure needed to support this unbridled drive for everything digital. There are many references on the dangers of EMR, 5G, mobile phone towers etc that may be consulted (eg. http://emraware.com/newsletter_november_december_2017.html).

- **Trust and Confidence –**

Without the serious exercise of ethical and moral considerations and debate, it is impossible for people to have confidence and trust in a digital economy. It is all too easy in today's world of material values to give lip service to legislation and to lie in the name of big profits. Without trust and confidence how can we, for example, trust in a cashless society with digital currencies only? How easy it is to enslave people by having total control over money via a banking system that continues to reveal many examples of corrupt behaviours. Concerns about identity theft pale into insignificance when compared with the possibility of these technologies to be used for controlling people through, for example, enforced "chipping" to access banking, food, utilities and other services, all in the name of "security". How easy would it be for a power-hungry oligarchy to control people (through chipping, spying via televisions, mobile phones, the Internet of Things, drones, AI etc) and establish a one-world order (alias dictatorship)? What was written in Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *1984* are the real concerns in a digital economy.

My hope, as a concerned citizen, is that, in its search for progress, Australia will uphold its reputation as a practical and moral country, and that in forming a strategy for the digital economy, consideration will be given to exercising balance, and to what is moral, ethical, and safe for all life, that choice is always provided, and that humanity is not sacrificed for the enticements of a machine world.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a view.

Yours sincerely
A concerned citizen