



The Digital Economy
Feedback from Wyndham City
November 2017

Discussion – The Digital Economy: Opening up the conversation

I Wyndham's prosperous future

Wyndham City is transforming rapidly as a city of opportunity and residential growth on the western fringes of Melbourne. Ideally situated between the two largest cities in Victoria (Geelong and Greater Melbourne) and two major airports, Wyndham is at the epicentre of western Melbourne residential growth. Geographic appeal, new housing, high birth rates, and major infrastructure investments are driving Wyndham City's transformation from a population of 228,088 in 2016 to nearly double that number (435,832) by 2036. ABS data indicates that between 2015 and 2016 Wyndham was the largest growing municipality Victoria-wide.

With advancements in digital technology and connectivity improving Wyndham's economic forecasts, our municipality is well placed to become a Smart City and connected employment and constellation hub for greater western Melbourne and western regional Victoria. Close enough to the Melbourne Central Business District to be part of the greater metropolitan area, but far enough away to emerge as a major regional city in its own right, Wyndham has a high capacity to support sustained economic growth, including new and emerging industries in the digital economy.

2 Wyndham's vision for digital technology

- 2.1 **Equity of access is important to us; everyone in our community should be able to benefit from digital technology and advancements in this sector.** This means recognising that Wyndham City is culturally and socially diverse, with growing numbers of young people and families.
 - 2.2 Wyndham's age profile shows us, for example, that the 12-17 year age cohort is set to grow at the fastest rate, and with a more culturally diverse population of youth who were born overseas than in greater Melbourne (33% to 26%). Further to this, many of Wyndham's linguistically diverse population for all age groups have low English language competencies. **Connecting with a population that may not speak English well is crucial for the technology sector in Wyndham and across Australia in enabling equitable service access.**
 - 2.3 **Data and technology helps with informed decision-making by local government because we can better understand our communities. Data improvements are important to local government and direct community service sectors in planning and delivering appropriate services.** We use this data to understand Wyndham's population and our unique service requirements. Resident data is used to consult with our constituents and businesses, connect with them, provide for their needs, and advocate for their futures.

As an example, census data indicates that the population of Wyndham 0-4 year olds is forecast to grow rapidly, reaching over 36,200 residents by 2036. On the other end of the age spectrum, 20% of older adults in Wyndham are dual or multilingual. Just over a quarter of these Wyndham residents over 65 years of age have completed year 12 or equivalent, compared to nearly 32% of older adults across greater Melbourne. This data, for example, tells us that technology needs to keep pace with the diverse life stage needs of our population, including early years' needs. Education across life stages —or lack thereof— should not be an impediment to digital access.
 - 2.4 Progress for Wyndham's digital future requires using **demographic information for gap analysis and as a technology driver.** Inclusive policies and innovation are necessary for Wyndham's future economic and social prosperity.
 - 2.5 Despite a range of datasets now being classified as 'open', **there are inconsistencies in data presentation and much remains inaccessible.** However, while much of the data is there, it remains difficult to put it to good use for better decision-making processes for the common
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good. Wyndham City has a large number of small businesses and active shared economy users who could strategically target markets and opportunities should a more user-friendly data framework be implemented. There is very little accountability of the governments and agencies that release data and this situation needs to improve.

3 Government's role in digital technology

- 3.1 **Local government has a role to play in utilising the latest technology to provide better services to its residents.** For instance, from Wyndham's perspective, there has been a tremendous increase in the use of mobile devices by people to access services and interact with us online. For example, we have gone online with our planning application processes to provide a more agile response for our customers:
<https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/services/building-planning/existing-planning-applications-permits/online-planning-register>
 - 3.2 **Local government also has a role in advocating for the needs of its residents,** using information such as census data, service data sets and community engagement data to inform government about gaps in service provision.
 - 3.3 Local government can **focus on collaboration with businesses and their communities,** assisting in cross-sector partnerships for innovative projects and the development of vibrant innovation ecosystems. **The East Werribee National Employment and Innovation Cluster** is one such partnership. This Innovation Cluster has operated as an important state research and technology precinct for over 100 years and features world-class research, medical and educational organisations. Following a public tender process, Australian Education City has been chosen to turn the 400 hectare site into a city that accommodates an international university precinct and a research and development hub. With Wyndham City and the Victorian State Government committed to its development, East Werribee will provide quality professional employment opportunities to address the significant and growing demand in the region.
 - 3.4 Technology is freeing industry, people, and jobs from geographic constraints – resulting in an increasingly mobile world. We need planning and infrastructure policies that connect regions and businesses in new ways. **The focus of our planning should be on developing regional and outer urban nodes – and creating connectivity within and between them.** Industry, people and jobs must be able to move freely between these nodes – as well as central metropolitan Melbourne.
 - 3.5 Relationships between local councils need to change. **In a hypermobile world – regional boundaries are going to become less important.** People, goods and services will constantly transcend and ignore these boundaries. Local councils need to rethink their relations with each other, building constructive and collaborative relationships, and not as competitors for state and federal funds and projects. Government needs to respond accordingly, promoting collaborative relationships rather than competition.
 - 3.6 As the digital economy breaks down geographic barriers it will expose Australian business to a huge global audience but also challenge existing business to be globally relevant. **The country will need to focus on maintaining or creating a competitive advantage** in industries such as agriculture, mining and education and building an adaptive workforce; adaptive in terms of being globally competitive, surviving impulses of disruption, and thriving on the opportunities to drive, develop, and lead new industries.
 - 3.7 Local governments such as Wyndham have developed or are developing **digital strategies.** Key guiding principles, priorities and digital enablers have been identified to implement the strategy. Wyndham City has already started digitising all high-volume customer transactions
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and interactions but there are multiple untapped opportunities for collaboration in government and through public-private partnerships.

- 3.8 **Local government has a role to play in setting an example** for the use of technology in the workplace, by leading the way in terms of technology implementation and development, improvements and use of virtual meetings, flexible working arrangements, and the creation of collaborative work spaces and digital platforms. **Wyndham City is currently rolling out a series of ‘Changing Spaces’ innovations in mobile and activity based working** that will revolutionise the approach to our work and work spaces in a local government context. Technology and smart design is being used not only to improve our workforce efficiency through accommodation solutions, but also our health and wellbeing as a productive workforce.
- 3.9 The online labour force has opened doors for many digital-based jobs, but there is room for growth and a need to build capacity in and perhaps even reskill workers in digital technology. This is particularly an area which Australia has strengths, with a very strong and highly regarded education system.
- 3.10 Further to the **need for skills development**, the momentum of the gig economy continues to grow unabated. Statistics show that by 2020 nearly 40% of the population will be freelancers. This essentially means that they will be generalists and characterised by a need for lifelong learning and adaptability.
- 3.11 The growing presence of the digital shadow economy should be a concern for governments. The personal data of Australian citizens is a valuable illicit commodity that is already being traded in a criminal digital underground economy. Confidence and costs could escalate should (more) regular breaches occur so **advanced cyber security and innovations are critical**.
- 3.12 The work being conducted by the Digital Transformation Agency to verify a users’ identity with Australia Post’s Digital ID is significant, especially since many government transactions rely on trust (e.g. online booking of hard rubbish collections). However, for local government the software systems used will need to be kept in-line with such trends to ensure the benefits of adoption can be realised.
- 3.13 Overall, government can play a key role in enabling new technology by resolving the current issues associated with the rollout of the National Broadband Network, investing in advanced infrastructure, supporting Australian companies as preferred suppliers of all products and service delivery (unless such products or services are not available in Australia), and by reviewing the current regime of tax rebates that incentivise industry investment in technology.

4 Wyndham’s Smart future

- 4.1 Wyndham City was recently announced as a recipient of funding through the federal government Smart Cities and Suburbs program. The grants provide an intriguing comparison to the approach of the Netherlands. Their national policy strives for collaborative work by local councils for local councils. The Australian-Dutch Alliance through the Global Smart City and Community Coalition (GSC3) would suggest that a bottom-up approach may be strongly considered for the next round of government funding.
 - 4.2 For Wyndham City, the **identification of government partners for proposed projects in complimentary areas is required**. This is an opportunity for public sector innovation—reducing duplication and coordinated approaches to large scale projects like autonomous
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vehicles, blockchain, and artificial intelligence. Due to the high costs of many Smart City projects, collaboration is often a necessary solution.

- 4.3 The governments across Australia have been slow to adopt digital technology and policies that have been demonstrated to have great value overseas. This is best exemplified through the Smart City work (3-4 years behind Europe) and the Digital Transformation Agency (a UK-acknowledged program). For Australia to thrive **there is a need to identify trends earlier, and to be at the forefront of innovations like Smart Cities.**
- 4.2 **One such innovation is driverless cars.** Driverless cars have huge potential to change our cities – and much of this change will be positive. They have the potential to make road transport faster, cheaper, and quicker. Driverless cars promise to help solve congestion because they'll use infrastructure more efficiently. In theory, we should see denser traffic flows, which should make better use of existing infrastructure.
- 4.3 **We're playing whatever small role we can in helping our Wyndham City prepare for this technology.** We've recently set up a Smart Cities Office that will help us create policies and regulations for future technologies like driverless cars.
- 4.4 **Wyndham is already preparing for driverless cars and technological change by taking the following actions:**

Initiative	Details
Smart parking	- feeds data to central servers that can guide vehicles to available parking bays
Partnerships with data companies	- partnering with the private sector to help create geospatial models self-driving cars use to safely navigate - partnering with the private sector to provide real-time info (roadwork, detours, school crossings, flows) which will feed mapping and navigation algorithms
Electric charging stations	- two installed already - ongoing installation
Electronic road sensors	- Wyndham owns 90% of its road networks - Installation of road sensors on our roads to collect real-time data on traffic flows – and this can feed navigation systems

5 Social inclusion in a digital age

- 5.1 Wyndham recognises the **potential for technological advancements to improve many of its community services.** For example, Council's Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Unit notes several ways in which digitisation could assist its work, including:
- Connecting socially isolated families by allowing live streaming of new parent groups
 - MCH nurses doing checks in child care centres to Skype the parents, to give them health promotion information and details of their child's check
- 5.2 The following opportunities for bridging the digital divide and **advancing social inclusion work** were highlighted by youth services at Wyndham:
- Providing young people who do not have access to internet/Wi-Fi with access to computers, internet, education and services to help link or refer to employment opportunities

- Providing education and information to young people around access to helpful resources through an online component (Council website)
- Providing young people with safe spaces in which to utilise resources for making online contact with friends/family/employers
- Utilising various methods to connect with young people and families on a digital platform
- Developing parents' capacity to access technology and support projects and/or programs aimed at our vulnerable families to increase their access/skills in relation to technology

5.3 The following opportunities for bridging the digital divide and **advancing social inclusion work** were highlighted by aged and disability services at Wyndham:

- Care workers/other workers already engaged in clients homes could also provide support and assistance to enable clients to learn how to use digital technology, or training could be provided at local libraries centres to support older people to learn how to use digital technologies (e.g. how to order shopping online)
- 'Siri'-type technology could be used to assist people with disabilities
- Skype and other digital platforms could be useful for those at risk of social isolation (and training/access to relevant devices could be made available for these individuals where required)

5.4 An important part of government's role is ensuring **equity of access and promoting education in digital literacy**. In a city such as Wyndham there are many opportunities to educate early years' children through to adults and advance their knowledge and capacity for technology jobs, skills, and lifestyle improvements.

Wyndham City is a municipality of great economic significance for the state of Victoria, its region, and Australia. Goals of emissions free mobility, improved liveability, better digital connectivity and adaptive job frameworks will advance Wyndham's vision of a thriving, digital-based region and country.

We look forward to working closely with the federal government as a partner in this digital age.
