

30 November 2017

Digital Economy Strategy team
Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
GPO Box 2013
Canberra ACT 2601

THE DIGITAL ECONOMY: OPENING UP THE CONVERSATION

The Geelong Chamber of Commerce welcomes the opportunity to put forward a submission in relation to the Digital Economy Strategy.

The Geelong Chamber of Commerce is one of Australia's largest independent chambers of commerce, with over 950 members ranging from micro businesses and sole traders through to large private sector, government and not-for-profit organisations. As the 'voice of business' in the Geelong, the Chamber is also the largest representative business organisation in the region with our members collectively employing around one third of Geelong's workforce.

In the Geelong region there are over 16,000 businesses, 97 per cent of which have fewer than 20 employees. This statistic is reflected in the Victorian economy and also nationally. In large regional cities like Geelong, small businesses are often the lifeblood of the economy and contribute significantly to the economic wellbeing and social fabric of the region.

As Victoria's second largest city, Geelong's business community is well-positioned to make the most of the many opportunities presented by the digital economy.

The Geelong economy is rapidly changing from its traditional manufacturing base to an economy driven by services (eg health, education, social insurance cluster, research, professional services, arts and culture), advanced manufacturing (eg Carbon Nexus, Carbon Revolution and Manufutures), and technology.

Geelong is also a hub for start-ups and increasingly has focussed on supporting the scale-up of existing small to medium sized businesses, recognising the significance and economic pay-off associated with measures that leverage off existing business growth potential.



PLATINUM PARTNER



Enabling technology such as access to affordable and reliable high-speed broadband is critical to ensuring the long term sustainability and growth of existing small and medium-sized businesses and underpins ongoing investment in skills development to scale-up their operations.

Developing the digital capabilities for businesses – of all sizes – to become more globally engaged will also have significant positive effects on business efficiencies and global competitiveness.

Businesses need access to a reliable and fast internet connection if they are to take advantage of the opportunities offered through the digital economy. There are many parts of Geelong however – including the central business district – that are yet to be connected to the National Broadband Network. This is a critical piece of infrastructure that Geelong businesses need right now in order to remain competitive and to grow further.

Businesses and governments worldwide are working together to build new and advanced digital technology capabilities and it's pleasing that the Digital Economy Strategy has identified the need for government/private sector/community partnerships to ensure Australia keeps pace with the global marketplace.

Cyber security is one area where a public/private partnership could be beneficial. The Australian Government has identified cyber security as a key element for national prosperity. A combination of strategically-focussed government policy and private investment could ensure better defences are put in place to protect businesses from the high cost, impact and interruption to business operations caused by cyber attack.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make a submission into this Digital Economy Strategy and we congratulate the Department on its extensive consultation process to date.

We look forward to the launch of this strategy in 2018.

If you have any questions in relation to our submission please contact me on 03 5222 2234 or 0419 581 735.

Yours sincerely



BERNADETTE UZELAC
Chief Executive Officer