



COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE STATE OF QUEENSLAND

SUMMARY REPORT

Sandwich Workshop

The Future of Digital Technology

Thursday 30 May 2019

12.30pm - 2pm

Gadens, Level 11, 111 Eagle St, Brisbane

Moderator

Rachel Sciascia, Partner, Corporate Advisory, Gadens

Panellists

Alexandra Bratanova, Research Scientist, Data61 Insight Team, CSIRO

Janet Brimson, Partner, Information and Analytics, Business Aspect

Tony Brown, Head of Corporate Media & Communications, Huawei Technologies Australia

Luke Marchant, Head of Govt Growth, Industry & Government Strategic Growth, Telstra Customer Management & Sales

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Workshop Summary

The 2019 Queensland Futures Institute *The Future of Digital Technology* workshop addressed current and impending opportunities and challenges surrounding key technological uses and applications. Strong partnerships with all levels of government are crucial to enable industry to capitalise on developmental opportunities, particularly in the key areas of digital infrastructure, automation and machine learning.

The workshop also reiterated the ongoing challenges around ensuring connectivity and equitable access in regional and remote areas, highlighting the important role of long-term planning by both industry and government in delivering sustainable scalable solutions to meet the rapidly expanding needs of these regions.

Further discussions explored improved industry pathways and workplace transitions as task automations gain momentum, the accountabilities of state government in improving digital infrastructure consistently across all metro, regional and rural regions, and addressing the skills gap in digital literacy, particularly for 'at risk' workforces in a post-digital economy.

Key comments by panellists

Alexandra Bratanova, Research Scientist, Data61 Insight Team, CSIRO

- Both industry and government must collaborate and adopt a long-term vision to fully understand and capitalise on the opportunities and challenges of current and emerging digital technologies
- Current investment trends and global megatrends provide additional context and potential impacts to consider in developing these pathways

Janet Brimson, Partner, Information and Analytics, Business Aspect

- Ongoing challenges around data expansions are restricting opportunities to fully capitalise on the utilisation of data
- Significant digital disruption is occurring across the mining and health sectors, which are a core focus, alongside education in the post-digital economy

Tony Brown, Head of Corporate Media & Communications, Huawei Technologies Australia

- Developing high-quality digital infrastructure is critical and requires partnership between industry and government
- New technologies, including 5G and NBN, are delivering a range of strong alternatives in servicing different parts of the economy and service sectors

Luke Marchant, Head of Govt Growth, Industry & Government Strategic Growth, Telstra Customer Management & Sales

- It is important for industry and government to partner at all levels and maintain a long-term focus as they leverage new technologies into the future

Questions

Queensland's regions tend to be especially disadvantaged on broadband network coverage - a problem exacerbated by poor digital literacy. This is a particular challenge for small businesses which need to embrace digital technologies to compete with larger players. How do we address this?

- The NBN is burdensome in regional areas due to cost and network strain. This issue lies with the technology - spending more on the same technology will not solve this problem. 5G technology for regional/remote areas is a higher quality and more reliable solution



- Equity of access should be a focus of industry and government. While there is pressure on start-ups to solve this, it ultimately depends of the transition from pre-digital to post-digital frameworks which fully take advantage of digital opportunities and subsequently increase efficiency
- Bridging the infrastructure gap, as well as the skills gap, is key to digital education in regional areas. This will enable better connectivity and a stronger industry
- Leveraging new technologies in regional industries is important. Data analytics and automation can help address this challenge, particularly for mining and agribusiness
- Encouraging entrepreneurship in the regions is particularly important, as the majority is currently not located in metro areas. Encouraging this through facilitating better equity of access will also support small business and could lead to smarter and more connected cities and communities

Task automation will likely affect Queensland’s future workforce in all industries, though there is much uncertainty about how and to what extent. What is your view on this?

- Automation facilitates a detailed, enterprise-level view, enabling the human workforce to focus on execution of the bigger picture
- There must be opportunities for re-skilling the workforces who would be impacted by automation. Equitable outcomes must be pursued when considering the displacing impacts of automation on the workforce
- Digital literacy, tools and education are also vital in ensuring the workforce is prepared to undergo this shift

Do you think that the Queensland Government should play a role in the future of digital technologies for Queensland?

- The Queensland Government clearly has a role to play, especially in facilitating the regional connectivity and infrastructure already discussed, as well as the associated plan for public investment in this technology
- Government must adopt a long-term view which persists through election cycles as this is a threat to consistent development of these advancements
- Industry and government must work together to provide adequate support of future demands on this digital infrastructure
- It is also Queensland Government’s role to consider not only the economic significance, but also the impacts on cultural and community capabilities of the State

Identify one area of policy reform the QFI could focus on to improve digital technologies for the State. And what would be the next step in doing this?

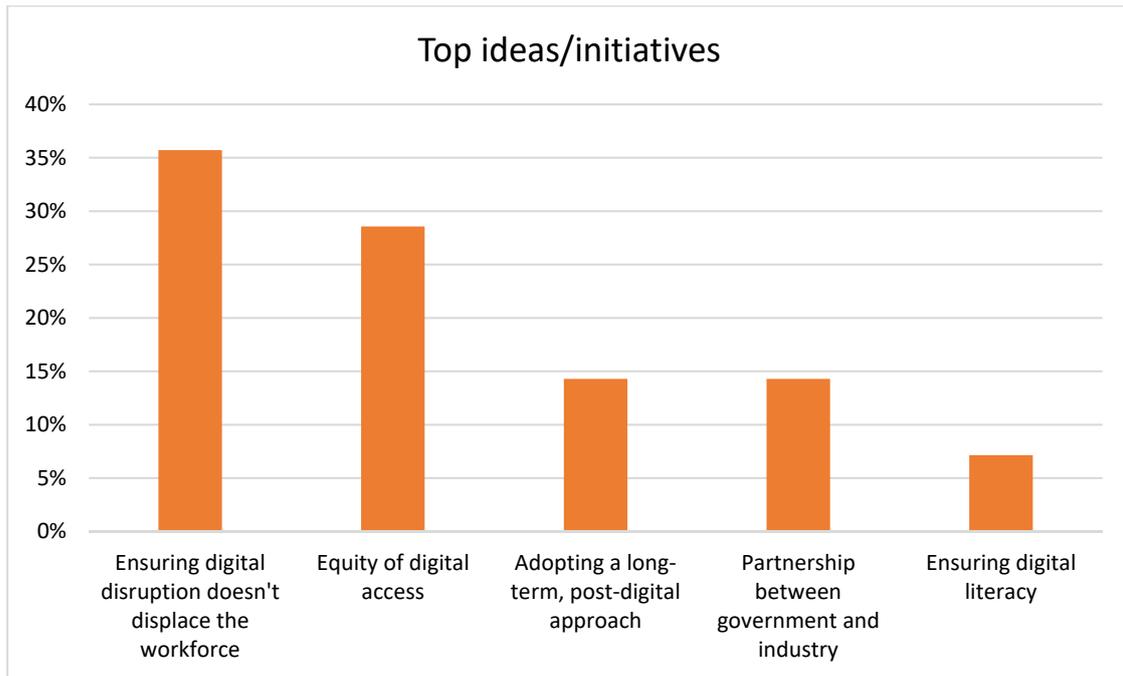
- The most important area of policy reform should focus on maintaining a minimum level of connectivity for all communities in the state, including regional and remote. If 5G is the chosen solution to this challenge, all levels of government will need to work together to enable this
- Guiding the behaviour around the adoption of machine learning, Automated Intelligence and blockchain is also important to the development of such technologies

General Discussion

- Queensland Health is using digital technology to facilitate advancement in healthcare in the form of eHealth services, which can be particularly valuable in regional areas if there is adequate accessibility and infrastructure in place. This could utilise the network to serve more customers or provide healthcare from home via regional remote patient monitoring
- There is also value to small business in regard to security and governance. Increased use of digital technology gives rise to cybercrime, which must be addressed moving forward by developing improved protocols and software
- Automated Intelligence and machine learning should be used whilst keeping equity in mind. Any advancements in this area should address the issue around the potential for displacement of workers. Such considerations would benefit the community – automation could be used to support an ageing workforce to enable them to continue working if they so choose, instead of being forced to retire



Summary of Workshop Comments



Summary of Ideas

- Infrastructure must support quality connectivity across all regions, including remote areas. Additionally, a minimum level of digital literacy should be sought to best position communities to take advantage of digital developments and encourage regional entrepreneurship
- Where automation or machine learning digital technologies are utilised or planned, the impact on equity within the workforce must be considered. Using this technology to support the existing workforce or retraining and upskilling of the displaced workforce should also be incorporated
- State Government must take a longer term approach, collectively planning past election cycles to work with industry in developing new and effective post-digital frameworks

The Queensland Futures Institute acknowledges the support of UQ Business School Commerce Honours student, Jordan Ferrari, for his summary of the Workshop.



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