

Australia's Digital Future

Article from the AICC(WA) Microsoft futureNOW Technology Series event hosted on 14 September 2021 at the Hyatt Hotel, Perth, featuring Senator Dean Smith and keynote speaker the Hon Jane Hume, Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and the Digital Economy, and Women's economic security speaking on the topic of "A leading Digital Economy by 2030".



Mr Jonathon Carley, Chief Operating Officer, DigitalIX, Mr Kelechi Anyaegbu, Founder & Principal Consultant, Data Engineering, Mr Stephen Cornish, Founder & Managing Director, Pentanet, Mr Timothy Cornish, Executive Director, Pentanet, Consul General David J. Gainer, U.S. Consulate General Perth, Ms Kerryl Bradshaw, Director Resources Industry, Microsoft Australia, Mr Larry Lopez, Vice-President AICC(WA); Partner, Australian Venture Consultants, Mr Mark Stickells, Executive Director, Pawsey Supercomputing and Resources Centre and Mr John Cluer, Chief Executive, Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce (WA)



Senator the Hon Jane Hume, Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and the Digital Economy; Minister for Women's Economic Security, Parliament of Australia and Senator Dean Smith, Chief Government Whip in the Senate, Parliament of Australia

The Australian Government's [strategy and roadmap to grow digitalisation](#), announced in this year's budget and setting out a vision through to 2030 was the topic of Senator Hume's passionate address to the AICC(WA).

To set the scene, the Israel connection was provided in both a cultural and commercial context. The Hollow Cause Cast performed the song [The World Belongs to Me](#), composed and produced by AICC(WA) member Keshet Kesh. This was followed by AICC(WA) Chief Executive John Cluer who drew comparisons between the Australian and Israeli experience of digitalisation.

Mr Cluer said that Israel, like Australia has always been an early adopter of new Technology. However, more so than Australia, Israel places development of technology at the core of its economy, and places growing reliance on its start-up sector to sustain its business eco-system. Senator Hume later affirmed this distinction, also noting that it is now Australia's Covid experience that creates the necessity, impetus and imperative for accelerated digitalisation.

Underpinning every industry sector in Israel is the use of hi-data, Ai, and advanced processing to delivery advanced technology. Food and agricultural development has produced world leading science. Israel's rapid COVID19 response was due to the advanced digitalisation of its health system. Industries such as defence, construction, telecommunications, manufacturing and finance have already been globally revolutionised by Israel's technology.

Senator Dean Smith introduced Senator Hume with the context of Western Australian industry and economic contribution, also commenting that Australia has embraced technology as the "torchlight" that has guided us through the pandemic. He described Senator Hume's Ministerial appointments as a "wise decision" and referenced her rapid ascension to the Ministry since entering parliament.

In framing her overview of Australia's digital strategy, Senator Hume cited the Prime Minister's description that "every business is now a digital business", although levels of adoption and reliance on the online experience do vary.

Citing the CSIRO and PwC research, Senator Hume outlined projections for economic growth and job creation that will result from digitalisation. Consumers are already accustomed to accessing banking, bookings, information, government and professional services and consumables online. As expectations continue to grow and lifestyle dependency further evolves, the critical elements of capacity, security, and ease of use require support. To place this acceleration in context Senator Hume mentioned that last year the level of digital activity in Australia grew more than it had in the previous ten years combined.

Her approach to leveraging the strategy is to demonstrate Government can work alongside and support business. Critical areas such as skills development, new industry growth, cyber security fit for purpose regulation, and data integration are all components of the blueprint.

Senator Hume noted Australia was historically famous for what we dig, grow and build, but now needed not only to make our digital journey globally competitive, but leading. Built on the values of technology being fair, safe and trusted, and fostering innovation and new ideas, she is greatly encouraged by Australia's potential to "show others the way".

Moving to examples in areas such as Ai, IOT, advanced robotics, sensor based tech, and space infrastructure, Senator Hume demonstrated work already in progress, and mechanisms to maintain and grow momentum. A level of Government investment exceeding half a billion dollars over the next three years will support this activity, alongside taxation incentives for R&D.

Funding will be directed towards the establishment of digital capability centres, and funding for skills development and education. The Government will also direct attention towards ethics, principles and values. Senator Hume asserted that Ai must be responsible, ethical and inclusive, and will require

mandated levels of human oversight and accountability. She also spoke about Consumer Data Rights (CDR) saying “Data is the lifeblood of the digital economy. CDR provides access to critical infrastructure to both access and protect data. The strategy places consumer consent at the centre of data ownership and use. Moreover, consumers are empowered by CDR to access their own information.”

Senator Hume concluded that the Digital Strategy is not a static document, and has the flexibility to adjust course as we head towards 2030 to account for evolving technology and global trends. Overall the strategy will deliver economic benefits and social outcomes, and the success of the strategy is centred on use of human capital.

Following Senator Hume’s keynote address, Mr Larry Lopez, AICC(WA) Vice President, facilitated discussion. Topics included sustaining bipartisan political support for digitalisation, economic diversification into new industries, telecommunications capacity, and environmental sustainability using tech within industries such as energy and resources.

A sponsors vote of thanks was provided by Ms Kerryl Bradshaw, Director Resources Industries, Microsoft Australia. With relatable and understandable objectives, Ms Bradshaw reaffirmed the ability of the digital strategy to align expectations and opportunities for growth. She added that the impact of Covid has accelerated digitalisation by necessity, however as both industry experience and national strategy demonstrates, we are still only just beginning our digital transformation.

