MAKING THE CONNECTION

ESSAYS ON INDIGENOUS DIGITAL EXCELLENCE
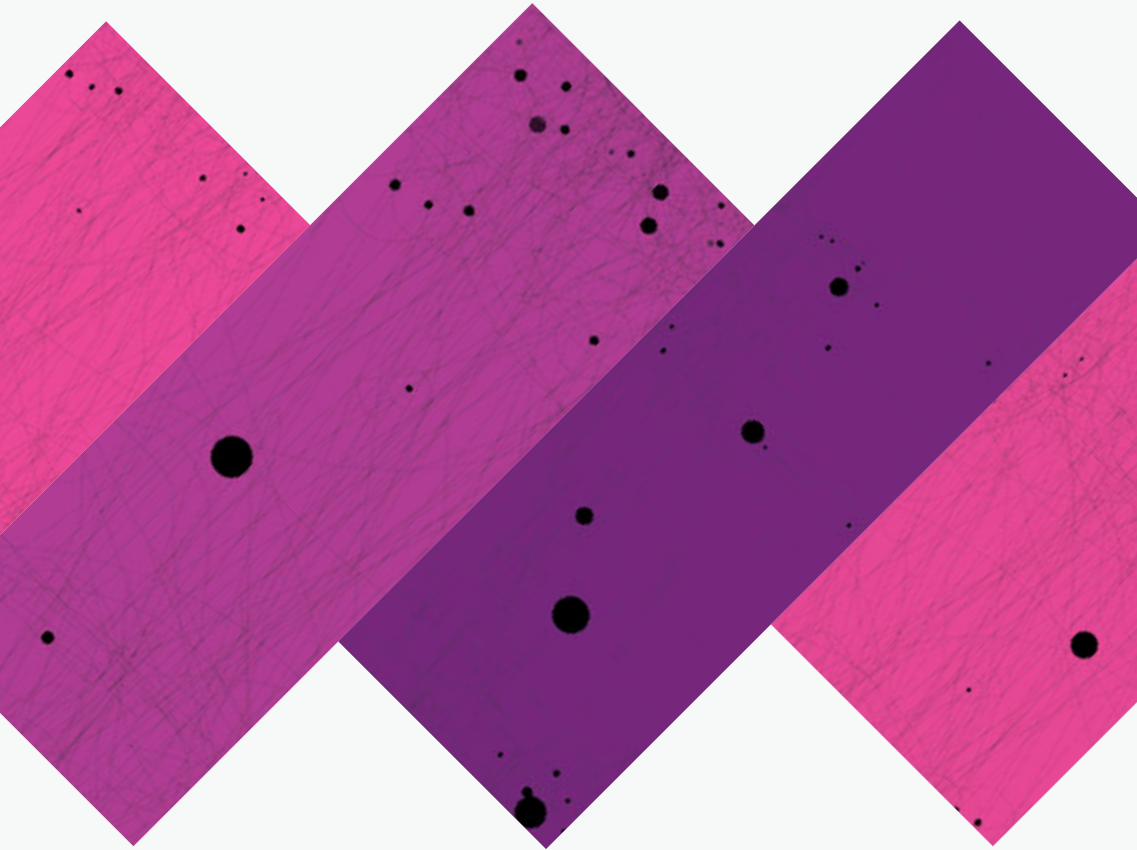
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Foreword

Geoff Booth

These days, being connected is something that is often taken for granted. For many of us, the day begins with a smartphone and ends with a smartphone. Throughout the day we are constantly online, through multiple devices and on multiple platforms. We are "connected" in every part of our lives – at school, at work, socially, financially. And yet, as the internet continues to play an increasing role in our lives, the gap between those who are connected and those who are not is also increasing. There are digital 'have-nots' right across Australia.

This is particularly so with many Indigenous communities in Australia where distance, language, education and many other factors add to the complexity of the digital inclusion equation. However, amongst these challenges is immense opportunity, and it is the opportunity to advance digital inclusion for Indigenous Australians which is at the heart of these essays.

Digital inclusion is central to Telstra and the work of the Telstra

Foundation. It is about working towards the goal of ensuring that every Australian is able to enjoy the benefits of being connected. It's a critical focus for us. Through our partnership with the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE) and through other Telstra and Foundation initiatives, we are seeing first-hand the benefits of nurturing digital excellence and the empowerment that comes along with this. These benefits are tangible. People use technology to learn, to communicate, to enhance their own culture, and to enhance their business opportunities.

The essays in this e-book look at digital inclusion from a variety of perspectives: from providing an in-depth look at the challenges to hearing what people in Indigenous communities think about the issue; from examining the role of Telstra and its responsibility to highlighting the incredible work already underway in this field. The essays also look at the next steps needed to capture further ground. As Lauren Ganley's essay highlights, digital inclusion is a subject on which no one professes to be an expert. This is not a book about right and wrong or hard and fast rules. It's about sharing experiences so that we can work together to understand the issues, address the problems, and celebrate the successes.

It is important to acknowledge the role that Telstra and the NCIE are playing in the challenge of digital inclusion. Telstra has been supporting the Telstra Foundation for more than ten years and has contributed many millions of dollars to improving digital inclusion in Australia. The Telstra Foundation is empowered to make decisions for the good of people without necessarily being bound by corporate outcomes. The decisions we make have a strong focus on shared value and this is evident through the Foundation's focus on digital inclusion.

We are very proud to have partnered with the NCIE to help bring to life the Indigenous Digital Excellence Hub (IDX Hub). As Jason Glanville writes in his essay, "…ideas need a place to grow to realise their possibility…" and we believe the IDX Hub will provide this very opportunity. Along with the NCIE, we are approaching this project with a mindset of patience, guidance and support. We are looking for mid to long-term results, rather than quick wins. We understand that, as Jason points out, the IDX Hub is something that needs to be built by Indigenous people, for Indigenous people. By 2020, we believe the IDX Hub will be proven to be a powerful source of digital ideas, digital growth, and digital excellence for Indigenous Australia.

Our vision for the future involves Indigenous people throughout the country benefiting from the digital environment. It is my hope and belief that these essays will play an important role in Australia's journey to digital inclusion. The Foundation has made a concerted effort to ensure that the viewpoints shared in these essays are from a variety of people who are directly involved with digital inclusion. Through the experiences and insights of the contributors we are benchmarking where we are now and where we want to be in the future; providing thoughts and direction for the years to come. Whether you are a casual reader on this topic or whether you have an interest in its success, we trust you will enjoy these unique views on this very important topic.

Foreword

Jackie Huggins

No one can escape the mass of social media and the digital economy that presents itself today. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities need to be able to participate fully in this digital economy. There are simply too many things that we get left behind on in terms of education, housing, employment and other social determinants that keep Aboriginal people at bay. The opportunity from today's digital world is, therefore, one that Aboriginal people must grab. By participating in the digital economy we will enhance the recognition and the status of Indigenous people and help close the gap.

As a Board member of the Telstra Foundation since its start in 2002, I am delighted to see the Foundation's support for the digital initiatives recorded in these essays. You will not need to read between the lines to see that Indigenous people have really embraced digital technology, in particular in remote communities. There are, however, barriers that make this more difficult, which means there

are important opportunities that are being unnecessarily left on the table.

In response, and over a relatively short period of a year, the Telstra Foundation has backed initial research on digital exclusion in Indigenous Australia, supported the Indigenous Digital Excellence Agenda Summit in partnership with the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE) and, through a $5 million grant over five years, funded an Indigenous Digital Excellence hub at the NCIE Redfern campus from 2013. Our aim is to really see what is possible with Indigenous people and all things digital.

We did not arrive at this point easily. It has taken the Foundation around five years to grapple with what would be the best approach and a suitable flagship initiative with Indigenous Australia. The major mission of the Foundation since the outset is to foster and look after young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Our challenge has been to find something that can help across the board, not just in parts of the country. At the same time, much has changed in the last ten years when it comes to growth in the digital world and I am the first to acknowledge to not knowing about it all. Whereas in the past the Foundation could focus on grants for charities doing good in the community, the changes in technology use over the past decade have meant we have had to squarely face the Foundation's response to the real issue of digital exclusion. This is, of course, a challenge that is also closer to Telstra's core business.

Within these essays you will find some hard won lessons on the topic of digital exclusion and opportunity. You will get to read the thoughts of Telstra's CEO on why participating in the digital economy is so important through to the ideas and experience of

practitioners on the ground who are there to make it happen. You will read about the thinking of senior people who work in the areas of digital inclusion in their various organisations. There is an illuminating mix of visionary thinking, ideas and practical solutions on this digital revolution that we are all embarking on.

The digital age is here to stay and no matter how we might resist it, it won't go away. As Indigenous Australians we need to be more digitally literate. Doing so will provide the opportunity to network over wide distances, to discover what is out there. We can capture job and business opportunities, get educated, and share stories.

Across the vast landscape of our country, from the Torres Strait Islands to Tasmania, I would like to see all Indigenous communities benefit from the digital decade we find ourselves in. There are a lot of issues that plague Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which need to be addressed. Taking a leading role in nurturing Indigenous talent within the digital world is a critical way in which we can contribute. I hope you find these essays an inspiration to play your part in Indigenous digital excellence.

Connect, Innovate and Support: the keys to digital inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Lauren Ganley

People react differently when they travel around Indigenous Australia. Some just see problems; others see opportunity; and most have questions. The ones you need to watch are those who have solutions. How you see Indigenous Australia says a lot about who you are, your values, judgement, and attitude to failure and possibility.

An under-represented skill in all this is listening and that is what this essay is about.

Over a period of a month we went and listened to what Indigenous

people had to say about digital inclusion – a hard to define concept for sure, however, when it comes to Indigenous Australia we should never let a lack of definition stand in the way of finding opportunities to help out.[1]

A shortlist of stakeholders to interview was identified, a letter was dispatched from the CEO of Telstra, David Thodey, inviting their participation, interviews were scheduled and travel arranged. For this exercise in listening we selected a mixture of representative bodies, sector experts and people we termed 'wise heads'. We had a balance of urban, regional and remote organisations. We had a discussion guide and some loose but important 'rules of engagement': keep an open mind, leave any preconceived ideas at the door, avoid generalisations, and recognise that these groups have been consulted many, many times before.

The decision we made early – to try not to define digital inclusion – was the right one. In fact, it would turn out we would rarely need to mention the words 'digital inclusion' in the interviews. Instead, we would ask about the take-up of digital services, who was missing out and why, and what opportunities are being missed.

Our first insight from the interviews comes early: no one is an expert in this area.

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1 The findings in this essay arose from stakeholder research commissioned by Telstra. Interviews were held with 35 Aboriginal organisations (29 face to face), typically with the CEO or other senior management during March and April 2013.

No one is an expert

Wayne Nannup invites us into a meeting room and offers us tea or coffee. We are at the offices of the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council in the Perth suburb of Cannington.

Wayne has just come from a three hour meeting with a Government Aboriginal business enterprise. We are conscious of not wasting his time as he is clearly busy.

The Council is transitioning from a representative body to more of a management footing as their Native Title Heads of Agreement with the WA Government nears finalisation. This is going to bring responsibility for land management to the Council and greater community development opportunities to the Noongar people of the South West of Western Australia. Wayne, as Director of Operations, paints a picture of a large agenda of change and opportunity for the 35,000 Noongar people from this area.

Wayne confesses he is 'very tech un-savvy' and wonders out loud why he has been selected for the discussion. You learn this lesson in stakeholder engagement over and over again – everyone has something to offer and with Wayne it turns out to be no different. Mid-way through the interview he pulls out his iPhone and gives us the insight that starts to build the picture of what digital inclusion means for Indigenous Australia.

"You know what, they have given me this iPhone and I don't need it. I liked my old phone. All I need is a phone. I don't need the apps, I don't need the email, I don't need any of it, just the phone. Just because it is there you don't necessarily need it."

In the final report we prepared on our stakeholder interviews, we described this as a watershed moment for the project. We have

all experienced what Wayne has described. Whether it is a laptop or computer, smartphone or tablet, we only ever use a portion of programs or a fraction of the potential of the technology. There will be stuff we don't know about, there will be stuff we simply don't need and there will be stuff we think is kind of interesting, however, is not useful in our day-to-day lives.

The watershed moment is this: what is it that stops someone like Wayne, or indeed anyone, from realising the full potential of the technology they have in their hands? And when it comes to solutions in this area, if you were to give everyone free smartphones with high-speed data, train them up, will there still be digital exclusion? At this stage of our interviews we can only answer this question with another question: if a person's propensity to use technology will cap the use of the technology, what in turn caps your propensity?

How people learn to use technology

A week later we are with Daniel Featherstone, the energetic General Manager of the Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA) based in Alice Springs. IRCA is the peak body which 'represents and advocates for the media and communications interests of remote and very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia.'

It is a rich discussion. Part of IRCA's challenge is to know what infrastructure is out there to support 'community connectivity'. As it turns out, there are all types of communications infrastructure in Central Australia. There is no doubt, though, that infrastructure is a limiting factor in the digital exclusion equation as with what you do once the infrastructure arrives at the front door of a household

in a remote community – who is around to set up the computer and configure the modem?

Daniel confirms what we have heard in other interviews. "All over the desert they are selling smartphones and tablets despite not having mobile phone coverage. The real challenge, though, is developing services which are mobile, scalable and affordable, all built on a focus of embedding the technology into people's everyday lives." Mobile-based technology appears to be where the future is for remote Indigenous communities: community wifi, smartphones and tablets.

IRCA and the remote Indigenous media sector have had some success with this 'embedding' challenge. It usually starts with showing how internet banking works and how checking your bank balance is 'free' (apart from data download costs) compared with checking it through the ATM at the community store. This 'embedding' approach works well. There is little or no formal training, however, there is a lot of 'over the shoulder' learning, or peer learning. Being present when problems or questions arise is the way to go, not necessarily classroom-style training.

This is, of course, how we all learn to use technology. If we have time or are inquisitive enough we will play around with different programs to see what they can do. Our friends or colleagues may show us different things, or just do it for us. We actually learn by doing and from what others tell us. It is incorrect to think that just because you are an Indigenous person in a remote community that you will somehow learn to use technology in a different way. The propensity of people to use technology is very much linked to informal learning and experimentation.

The next step with mobile

Our interviews with IRCA and others identified that the predominant use of digital services in Indigenous Australia is for entertainment and social connection – perhaps little different to the rest of Australia. The multimedia capability of many devices is also being widely used – both in a consumption and production sense. If we learn by doing, then a natural extension of this is to leverage this process and provide the opportunity for people to take that next step, just like IRCA is doing with internet banking.

These next steps rest around showing the practical side of the internet: online government services, buying or selling goods online, education resources, e-health enablement or apps and Indigenous specific applications such as a place to keep digital cultural records. Such services need to be appropriate for their audience: more user friendly; less words and more image-based navigation. We often heard how difficult some 'wordy' government sites were to follow and understand. They also need to be services that are actually needed in communities, practical, with someone showing others how they can be used. Appropriate web-based services matched with the right approach as to how people take that next step is the message we are starting to hear.

This is certainly being demonstrated up in the Torres Strait. Fred Gela, Mayor of the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC), confirms as much. "We have come a long way in recent years. There was a strong need for upgraded broadband and mobile phone coverage across our fifteen islands and this has largely occurred, although there are still areas where no mobile phone coverage is available."

The Council has supported a number of Indigenous Knowledge

Centres (IKCs) – or 'libraries'. Four of these have wifi where access is paid for at a concessional rate. IKCs allow for cultural stories and local celebrations to be digitally stored with appropriate access protocols. The Council is looking at supporting wifi in the remaining IKC locations.

Again we see that the future is clearly about mobile devices. Access to services that support mobile devices is critical. Beyond community wifi projects (with appropriate support), we hear that this needs to extend to affordable and simple data plans, apps with no data charges, and having the right phone for the right environment.

The TSIRC confirms what we have heard elsewhere: improving access does not necessarily mean providing free access, however, it does mean affordable services. In just about all of our interviews we talk about the question of the affordability of such services. Solutions need to be supplied on a sustainable basis with a pricing structure to match a reasonable data usage with the income level of the area. It is about providing an opportunity to connect, not a guarantee of an open-ended connection. This is a dominant view in our interviews, however, not a unanimous one.

Connection, responsibility and diversity

To operate a program that increases the use of digital services there needs to be some duty of care around cyber safety awareness. An underlying theme in our interviews is that digital services go hand in hand with programs that support and advise on responsible use, and so it should be with any initiatives to improve digital inclusion. The consensus view is that social networks provide an enabling – and sped up – environment for bullying. This is both a reflection of wider

community challenges and poor consideration of the consequences of unwise use of such channels.

In addition to cyber safety awareness, stakeholders pointed to another pre-existing appetite, that of innovation, which providing connection helps feed. We heard many times of the ingenious use of many of the features available on smartphones and tablets and a propensity to engage with the audio-visual nature of many internet services. This provides a critical insight about digital inclusion: digital inclusion is as much about providing a platform for innovation which is Indigenous led to develop Indigenous products that Indigenous people need as it is about just providing a connection. This insight would grow to reflect Telstra's commitment to projects such as the Indigenous Digital Excellence Agenda through its partnership with the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence.

In terms of technology take-up, young people are very tech savvy, however, money is an issue when it comes to the cost of data and equipment. Community resources are often relied on in this area. Wayne Muir, CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS), also sees a second group, which has largely grown up without technology, typically the elders in the community.

In the regional and urban areas VALS services, barriers to increased use of digital services are typically income driven. It seems appropriate at this time to raise a question which has been in the back of our minds since the beginning of the stakeholder interviews: is there any difference between Indigenous low-income groups and other low-income groups when it comes to the challenge of digital inclusion? As Jennifer Samms, Strategic Adviser for VALS, who has also joined our meeting points out, Aboriginal people are more repre-

sented in the low-income group and potentially face multiple factors affecting their low-income status such as intergenerational poverty, presence of extended families, being off-country and trauma in their lives. This clearly adds to the complexity and entrenchment of disadvantage, however it is also true that several barriers to improved digital inclusion do not discriminate between low-income groups.

With this and other interviews we also confront the question of how digital inclusion may vary between remote to regional to urban settings. There is little doubt that remote settings bring their own challenges, however location will not be the only factor to affect an individual's propensity to take up and use technology for example. Again it is not as simple as saying there are uniform geographical differences. Sure there are 'infrastructure barriers' the more remote you get as our interview with IRCA has shown. However, if all such infrastructure barriers were addressed, people could still be digitally excluded.

Piecing it together

Our travel takes us up to Darwin. In the coming week Telstra will announce, in partnership with the Northern Territory Government, a program to roll-out new mobile and fixed broadband services to remote Northern Territory communities – a much needed investment for some of Australia's remotest communities. The Telstra Board will arrive in the Top End and there will be much interest in what we have found to date.

We have nailed some key insights: inclusion is about how a person learns to use technology; it is about leveraging that use to the next step; it is about providing the opportunity to connect; it is also

about understanding that, with providing the opportunity, there is a responsibility around safety awareness.

After thirty or so interviews we have identified five groups of barriers that affect digital inclusion:

1. **Infrastructure:** this barrier is essentially about the 'pipes' to the home, community or organisation office.
2. **Hardware in the home:** this goes to the logistics and support that is necessary to get modems, computers or wifi into the home or in the provision of community services such as community wifi or hubs.
3. **Affordability:** this barrier is about people's ability and willingness to pay for data and other digital services and devices.
4. **Propensity:** this barrier is about the ability and desire of individuals to take up and use digital services and technology.
5. **Appropriate web based services:** this is about the barrier created when websites are very wordy and difficult to navigate.

To make sense of these barriers we return to a theme mentioned several times in this essay: if you solve one barrier, such as the affordability barrier, would there still be exclusion? If you solved the infrastructure barrier would there still be exclusion? The answer to both is yes, there will still be digital exclusion. In fact the barriers to increased digital inclusion operate as a hierarchy. You need to address the prior one to realise the benefits of the next. There is no sense in having 'appropriate web based services', for example, if the 'propensity' to take up the service is not there. There is no sense in addressing propensity issues if a person cannot afford the service, and so on up the chain.

As the hierarchy of barriers shows in the figure below, each barrier can only be addressed to a finite extent before it gets limited by the barrier below it. What this implies is that targeted programs about an individual's next step will deliver more benefit than programs designed for broad audience-wide improvements. This also implies that big initiatives designed to reach or cater for large parts of the population are unlikely to realise their potential. Further, the compounding nature of the barriers means that there is a whole portion of 'potential digital services' that are, in effect, unavailable because of how the barriers limit one another.
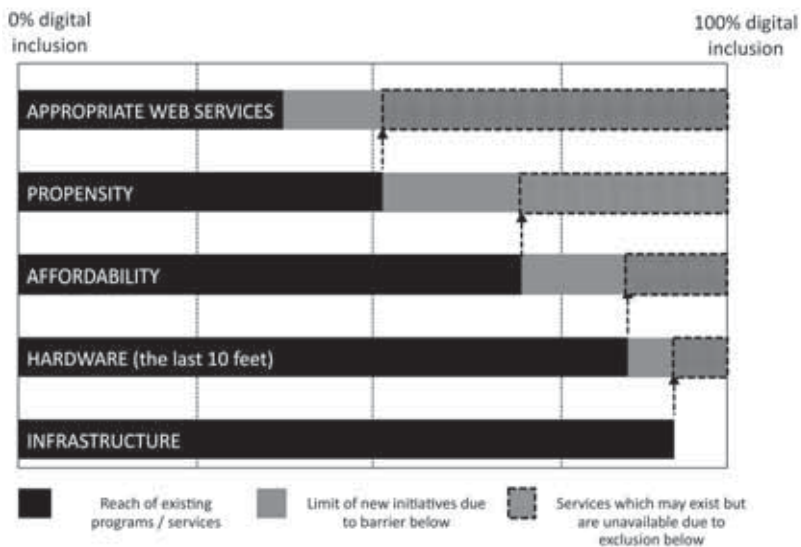
Breaking down the barriers

There is greater opportunity to address digital inclusion with some barriers than others. Anecdotally and from our interviews you will get your 'best bang for your buck' by putting resources into the 'propensity' barrier first followed by 'appropriate web based services', 'affordability', 'hardware (the last 10 feet)' then 'infrastructure'. Although infrastructure is not 100 per cent available throughout the country, it is often the first thing people blame. Infrastructure is needed, however there are plenty of other areas where more efficient gains can be made in the digital inclusion challenge.

In all this we need to remember there will be Indigenous people who are not digitally excluded. There are potentially around 100,000 to 120,000 low-income Indigenous households in Australia (about 40 to 50 per cent of all Indigenous households) with roughly an equal split between those with internet access in the home and those without. The largest group of Indigenous households which potentially face barriers to increased digital inclusion are in regional areas, constituting about half of all low-income Indigenous households. About 1 in 5 low-income Indigenous households are in remote or very remote locations and only 1 in 5 of these have internet access. Programs to address digital inclusion are most needed in regional areas, however, the scale of the challenge is more pronounced in remote areas. It is important, though, not to see this as an issue for *all* Indigenous people.[2]

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2 This information has been derived from a review of ABS data from the 2011 Census on internet connectivity using a proxy income level of $600pw of total equivalised income to examine low-income Indigenous households.

In practical terms, addressing this 'digital divide' is about improving the opportunity to connect, providing a platform for innovation, and improving on the ground support. In short: connect, innovate and support. All three need to be supported by cyber safety education and awareness.

Programs that improve the opportunity to connect are about improving affordability, providing community access to wifi services, and internet resources that encourage individuals to take the next step in using the internet. Examples are low-priced, prepaid data plans or hotspots for low-income Indigenous communities. This could be extended to education around purchasing the right phone for the environment (a challenge we saw in remote Australia), or use of free downloads for certain sites and apps.

Providing a platform for innovation is about funding a properly structured innovation hub to develop apps or culturally appropriate internet services to meet the 'next step' needs of Indigenous Australia. This is about solutions which meet real needs – not just 'nice to haves'– with a focus around the marginal improvement which is possible, remembering the digital inclusion hierarchy means you cannot solve for all barriers. Projects in this area cannot be justified on the basis that they have the potential to reach every Indigenous person in Australia, because they simply will not.

On the ground support is the key to getting these initiatives underway. This means having someone present when problems arise and to just make sure stuff happens in communities or for Indigenous organisations. One possible model is through supported roles within Land Councils or Indigenous media organisations and local 'digital inclusion development officers' that start to pool community resources and volunteer help to get programs underway.

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A month after we started, our listening exercise is over. People do react differently when they travel around Indigenous Australia. Some just see problems; others see opportunity, and as we have said, most have questions. There are plenty of solutions to the digital inclusion challenge, however, at the end of the day our answer was found in the way an individual learns to use technology. Digital inclusion is as much a story about the individual as it is about the technology needed to address exclusion.

Digital Inclusion and Aboriginal Futures: Three Questions

Dr. Lester-Irabinna Rigney

Introduction

What is digital inclusion? What access do Indigenous Australians have to the internet and mobile technologies? How can digital inclusion be increased to meet Indigenous future aspirations? As Australia and the wider world enters a new era of global interconnectedness via technology, these three questions are important to understand whether or not Indigenous peoples futures can take advantage of business and social opportunities offered by new digital technologies. Technology is changing everything. The internet and digital economy has brought economic prosperity and social advancement across sectors that include health, education, mining, aviation and

manufacturing. New technologies are redefining how business is done and, in doing so, redefining us and how we interact with one another. Anytime, anywhere, technologies are bringing big opportunities and a new wave of solutions for success even more influential than that of the past decade. The potential Indigenous rewards are huge. How ready are Indigenous Australians to reap the benefits of this opportunity?

In 2013, I led a research team at the University of Adelaide that sought the answers to these very questions. The research was commissioned by the Telstra Foundation and resulted in a report titled: Digital Inclusion and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: A Discussion Paper (Rigney, Falkner, Radoll, Wilmore 2013)[1]. It is not my intention to reproduce the entire findings of this report here. My task is far less ambitious where I seek to outline key report findings relevant to the questions I pose above. In the report we examined and defined digital inclusion and located where the greatest digital divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians lies. We considered Indigenous digital readiness. Importantly, we examined internet uses and type of connection including mobile and fixed line telecommunications. Finally, we investigated supportive and inhibitive barriers to digital inclusion drawing upon several national and international case studies.

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1 The research was contracted to the University of Adelaide. The project team included: Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney, Associate Professor Katrina Falkner, Dr Michael Wilmore (University of Adelaide) and Assistant Professor Peter Radoll (University of Canberra).

What is Digital Inclusion?

There are many definitions of digital inclusion. Other similar terms include digital divide, which means those who have access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) and those who do not. Our report used the definition of Selwyn & Facer (2007) who believe that digital inclusion should aim to: 'enable all individuals to make informed and empowered choices about the uses of ICTs whilst ensuring these individuals have ready access to the resources required to enable them to act on these choices'. While this definition is relevant, I have written elsewhere that sustainable access and training is crucial for Aboriginal digital empowerment (Rigney 2011). Digital inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, using the powerful new tools of the internet and web-enabled devices, promises empowerment but most communities are still figuring out how to adapt and prosper from the internet potential.

What access do Indigenous Australians have to the internet and mobile technologies?

There is a significant gap in access between Indigenous and non-Indigenous households. The largest digital divide is in the very remote areas of the Northern Territory followed by outer regional areas on the fringes of major cities. These findings indicate big challenges for digital inclusion, as the majority of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population live in either a major city or outer regional areas where the digital divide is at its greatest. More research and policy work is needed in this area.

While in remote areas technology infrastructure remains a significant part of the reason for a gap in ICT access, infrastructure is not the primary cause of low ICT uptake by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We know this because in areas where the internet is available, Indigenous access and usage is still low.

There is not one cause of low Indigenous ICT uptake but a multitude of other socio-economic factors. These include:

- lower levels of literacy
- ICT cost
- less experience with science and technology
- less motivation and appreciation of how the internet would benefit
- poverty
- poorer health outcomes

As we can see, the digital divide is actually a sub-set of broader social inequalities. Our findings are unequivocal that it is the 'cost of technology services' that is the single largest barrier to Indigenous ICT usage, just as it is for vulnerable groups around the world' (Rigney, Falkner, Radoll and Wilmore 2013:9). Reform enablers to address this include cost effective technology services, flexible payment methods such as prepayment for landline telephone services, mobile phone with internet package.

The type of internet connection is important to understanding how the Indigenous population accesses the internet. The 2011 Census data (ABS 2012) shows that the majority of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities access the internet via a broadband connection in the home, while only a small number access the internet

via dial-up and other means. We also found that the Indigenous population is accessing the internet via mobile phones or mobile devices at a higher rate than of non-Indigenous peoples. It is clear from our report that mobile phones are the preferred telecommunications device used by the Indigenous communities and there is a strong preference for prepaid mobile services. This is particularly true for those who cannot access a home phone or payphone. The findings point out that digital inclusion is not enabled by simply ensuring that all households or individuals have adequate access to ICTs, but by including as well, a focus to ensure that individuals have the skills and ability to exercise their digital choices as they wish. Providing Indigenous communities with digital tools like mobile phones, computers or tablets is problematic without sustained technical training and support on how to use them. Our findings tell us that matching the type and quality of technology to needs and aspirations in consultation with the Indigenous communities is an important digital enabler.

Important also is creating locally sustainable training through long-term funding that is realistic about the capacity of the community to generate ongoing resources for its maintenance. Digital access to technology combined with digital competency enhances sustainable positive behaviours for the individual to be empowered to act and engage digitally.

The potential rewards and opportunities, if sustainability of digital training and engagement can be achieved, include self and community development; boosting Indigenous businesses; and better community services. Consideration must be given to funding and the continuity of staffing for training projects in Indigenous

communities. A life online will only be embraced if there is localised community support.

Creating locally sustainable strategies means thinking about long-term funding upfront and being realistic about the capacity of a community to generate the ongoing resources needed to maintain the work. Furthermore, apart from the extrinsic support provided by programs and organisations, sustainability can only be achieved through intrinsic changes in the communities themselves, which must come about from behaviour and attitudinal change to bring about real and lasting change in communities. While the internet has put Indigenous communities on the cusp of transformative opportunities for new social, economic and business opportunities, some Indigenous individuals and communities will fear it, won't recognise it or will consider it unnecessary.

Initiatives that maintain momentum, build trust and increase the level of engagement among participants are more likely to sustain and support digital programs, structures, and relationships.

A crucial finding of our report is that marginalised groups are susceptible to cyber-crime and cyber-vulnerability. Cyber-safety is fundamental to digital inclusion for all Australians, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Issues include internet victimisation of youth, unwanted sexual solicitation, exposure to pornography and cyber financial crime. These are front line matters that require front line strategies toward achieving an Indigenous digital future.

How can digital inclusion be increased to meet Indigenous future aspirations?

The imperative for changing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander digital technology experience is clear. Our report outlines that change must include sustainable access to internet and ICT while addressing factors of empowerment, social issues, digital readiness, financial barriers, long-term sustainable training and cyber-safety. To realise the full commercial, social and business benefits other Australians are experiencing from the new wave digital enterprise, Indigenous Australians must become creators, producers and administrators of technology, not merely consumers.

Change is necessary because Australia's overall performance in outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander digital readiness and access has been poor (Radoll 2006; 2010). Ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the skills to benefit socially and economically from the internet in parallel with whole-of-government accountability, strong policy and culture of change are important to realise reform. Australia is a successful wealthy nation yet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are in danger of remaining on the digital fringe that marginalises them from seizing high productivity and prosperity opportunities offered by new technology.

Key enablers and opportunity areas that could drive an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander digital inclusion agenda in Australia include:

- Greater digital access in region of major cities and remote and very remote areas
- Affordable and sustained internet training and ICT
- Addressing financial barriers

- Market ICT literacy programs specifically to communities
- All programs and training information to reach children, parents, elders
- Cyber safety programs (Introduction of technology without cyber safety may amplify forms of inequity)
- Flexible payment methods such as pre-payment for landline telephone services and mobile phones with internet packages
- Encourage advanced Indigenous users of ICTs to become ICT trainers or mentors, technology consumers, producers and managers.

The growth in mobile access and the internet is changing the way people interact through social media and how they consume digital content. With the implementation of the Federal Government's National Broadband Network now underway across the country to ensure the future wealth for Australia both in economic and social terms, it is important that Australian Governments and Indigenous communities themselves explore both digital inequities and how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can benefit from the upside of these emerging new technologies.

Greater understanding of these issues at the time when communications systems are being established optimises action for greater Indigenous digital access to powerful new and exciting communication tools to build a path to prosperity.

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Liberating Digital Possibilities

Jason Glanville

Language is important. At the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE) we like to use language that talks to 'liberating possibility'. This is about making sure that even in the most difficult of circumstances, the human spirit can thrive and do better, achieve and be safe and happy. It is a different kind of aspiration. Every generation, Indigenous or not, wants something more, wants something different, and it's no different for this generation of young blackfellas. So why talk about disadvantage and exclusion when we can talk about innovation, excellence and opportunity?

By the time this essay is published, the NCIE will be well underway with planning and delivering its latest venture in our pursuit of Indigenous excellence. In a purpose-built facility at our home in Redfern we will have a group of designers, thinkers, facilitators and mentors who will incubate not only digital ideas, but nurture entrepreneurs

who will create Indigenous digital enterprises, platforms and applications: liberating possibility.

It is one of the really exciting aspects of this whole digital question to say to a generation of young people who are engaged in the digital space that we want to honour their entrepreneurialism. This is not a term that is often used in Indigenous Australia. We know from our experience at the NCIE with talking to young people that very few have ever said to them 'that's a great idea' and for them to realise the entrepreneur within. 'I didn't know I was an entrepreneur.' Well you are.

We want to invest in entrepreneurs and in their ideas to liberate digital possibilities. The Indigenous Digital Excellence (IDX) Hub in Redfern is about creating a safe space for quick fail opportunities, supporting the iterative process that comes with building successful entrepreneurs. We want to match the pace with which you can do things in a digital space with an environment where there is an acceptance that you may pitch and fail, get halfway there and have to reframe what you are doing, or even start with a new idea, which builds on the last.

We did not arrive at the IDX concept overnight. In some respects it represents years of thinking. The journey not the destination, as they say. So here is the journey we have taken to liberate digital possibilities.

Start from the start

It has always struck me as strange that with Indigenous cultures we have a single unbroken thread of human history stretching across more than 70,000 years yet it is only during the most recent part where

there has been this 'disadvantage' narrative. You don't survive in what must have been the harshest of circumstances for 70,000 years or more without having some key capabilities residing in individuals, families, culture and society. In fact, what the longest continuous unbroken thread of human history points to is an extraordinary level of capacity and resilience, innovation and adaptability, not disadvantage.

The language of disadvantage has legitimised Governments and others to play in the space, to frame the issue in the negative. It is a short step from here to engaging with, investing in and ultimately trying to solve the problems that impact on the lives of blackfellas across the country with a view that disadvantage is the accepted default position or ambition for our mob. We talk about the beautiful continent and the inheritance of the oldest continuous living culture but then condemn people through our language and actions to a future framed in disadvantage.

The demographic reality around this generation of young blackfellas is such that it is the biggest in Australia's history. Nearly 60 per cent of our mob is under 25 years old and the population is growing at a much faster rate than the general population.[1] This is an opportunity that we can either respond to and harness, or we can continue to get it wrong through a set of deficit assumptions condemning this generation of young people to a life that is less than they deserve.

This sense of frustration is felt by many but it is a spur for action. In 2006 the Redfern community, in partnership with the Indigenous Land Corporation and others, saw the opportunity to turn the

1 This feature of Indigenous demographics is well documented. See, for example, CAEPR Indigenous Population Project, 2011 Census Papers, Paper 5 Population and Age Structure by Dr Nicholas Biddle.

long-standing but shut down Redfern Public School into a new type of education centre – one that could be framed in the language of opportunity. A school rescued and restored and the perfect way to talk about excellence. A piece of physical infrastructure that says to a generation of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this is how much we believe in your capacity to excel.

This is the genesis and the philosophy behind NCIE and all the projects with which we are involved. It is interesting when you talk to people about 'excellence'. Many tend to go straight to the 'top end' of excellence, which is about high achievement. However, for us 'excellence' is about stepping up and stepping through. It is about the 'first' in family phenomenon: the first generation of kids to stay in school; the first to stay out of custody; the first to get a job; the first to stay and work; the first to matriculate into higher education. Stepping up and stepping through. Sending a message that we believe in a young fella's capacity for excellence, no matter, from the most at risk groups right through to the high achievers.

Finding excellent projects

Since NCIE opened its doors in 2010 we have had over 20,000 people experience what excellence means. So what do you do once you have had the opportunity to experience 'excellence'? This is where the Telstra Foundation comes in and the beginning of NCIE's treasured partnership on all things digital. You cannot do what we do at NCIE without partners like the Telstra Foundation. It's more than funding. It's buying into the vision. It's living the language.

Our first project together has become a forceful template. In 2011 we began creating a closed online community called the Community of Excellence. It's an alumni tool. It's the way to keep young

people who have experienced what we have to offer at NCIE connected to NCIE, connected to each other. It is, if you like, the virtual NCIE. We have been building the Community of Excellence platform for three years, iteratively, letting each phase inform the next.

Over this time the Community of Excellence has been helped by more than 50 co-creators and co-developers – all young blackfellas. They sat down with experts who design the front and back end systems for major corporations and Governments to look at every aspect of the site: its interactivity, its look and feel, its support for achieving individual excellence. The result is young people use it. They refer to it as the blackfella Facebook, something of which we are very proud. It is a moderated site, very focused on peer support and growth. It's about young people posting their ambitions then celebrating their achievements. This might be as simple as attaining a particular reading level at school or getting accepted into a particular degree course or being able to compete at a particular level or achieving some kind of artistic creative goal. It's a positively focused aspirations-driven tool, which has over 700 members and has received approximately 100,000 page views.

Now, it would have been very tempting to get as many people onto the platform as quickly as possible, but we have staged it in a way which matches an 'excellence' process: test it and then fix it, put more people on, test and fix again. Three full years to get it right. By allowing it to be led by the people who use it has created success and the template for the next big leap in the digital opportunity for our mob.

The summit

In January 2013 we launched the Indigenous Digital Excellence Agenda (IDEA) with the Telstra Foundation. The idea behind IDEA was to create a wide-reaching research, consultation and collaboration project to explore the concept of Indigenous Digital Excellence: a project which talks to the possibilities of the digital world for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. Other essays in this e-book are in part the result of this collaboration: Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney on what is digital exclusion; Lauren Ganley on what Indigenous leaders and others have to say on the topic; Luke Pearson on the online collaboration process.

The culmination of this six-month project was the IDEA Summit held in late June, 2013. Over 30 emerging and established young Indigenous leaders gathered at the NCIE campus in Redfern to collaborate on ideas. We heard from speakers – local and international, workshopped ideas, debated and discussed, stepped up and stepped through. The Twitter hashtag for the collaboration, #IndigenousDX, reached over 1 million people, made 11.3 million impressions and had 6,251 tweets from 1,004 users. Our IDEA website had 3,700 visits from 2,090 visitors and 11,129 page views. It was an energetic and purposeful conversation.

Our young co-designers generated five ideas, which they pitched to an enthusiastic audience of peers and experts at the end of the second day.[2]

IDEA Global: an online Indigenous marketplace for ideas,

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2 This description of the outcomes from the IDEA Summit appears in the Evaluation Report for the Indigenous Digital Excellence Agenda Online Collaboration, March-June 2013 and Summit, 27-28 June 2013 prepared by Ruth McCausland.

projects, events, skills and resources and could be described as an Indigenous combination of Kiva, Kickstarter, Etsy and SkillShare. It seeks to cross national boundaries and connect Indigenous people around the globe.

Kinship Indigenous Network: aims to reconnect Indigenous people to their families by providing an online network to appropriately store information about individuals and their family relationships. The core idea is to assist Indigenous people in finding their relatives through the use of digital technology.

Doris: a playfully named Indigenous search engine that helps people find authentic Indigenous content and perspectives in innovative ways. Envisaged as a browser extension, the search engine would use filters and approval processes developed by Indigenous people and maintained through community legitimacy.

Blaxess: aims to connect Indigenous people without digital devices to people keen to donate used devices. Beyond the transfer, reuse of digital devices such as laptops, smartphones and tablets, Blaxess aims to develop a digital literacy program that supports people receiving the devices and their communities.

Blackfella Enterprises: an initiative aiming to commercialise traditional cultural knowledge sensitively and appropriately, ensuring that ownership and benefits flow to Indigenous communities. Through new digital social enterprises, elders and young people can work together to revitalise and strengthen culture and to bring economic independence. Customary medicine, benefiting from traditional knowledge developed over thousands of years, was used as an example of a potential traditional product that could be sold online.

In all of these ideas there is no mention of disadvantages to

overcome. No mention of voids to fill to get things to the status quo. Just digital possibilities.

Over the course of the Summit, co-designers were also given the opportunity to explore and develop their ideas on what is essential for the success of Indigenous digital excellence. Their words, their language. At the top of the list is self-determination. As Luke Pearson pointed out in his talk, "nothing about us, without us". The role of community involvement and empowerment was another significant theme where initiatives are driven by the needs and requirements of the community, not externally imposed. Connectivity: the power of digital technologies to strengthen personal and communal ties and overcome geographic boundaries. Sustainability: digital inclusion strategies focused on building the capacities and technical skills of Indigenous communities to design, control and implement their own digital programs. Culture: digital as a tool for supporting and strengthening culture. Youth: the role of young people as frontrunners of the digital revolution. Cyber safety: the need for approaches that are customised to the specific cultural contexts of Indigenous people.

And to the Hub

Ideas need a place to grow to realise their possibilities. This is the thinking behind the Indigenous Digital Excellence Hub at the NCIE campus, generously funded through a five-year commitment by the Telstra Foundation.

As a start the teams which developed and pitched the ideas at the Summit have been offered an incubation spot at the IDX Hub. This has come with seed funding, 24 hours of strategic advice on

concept and enterprise development in the digital sector, and a
co-working space. Funding will support the five teams to prototype
their concepts and develop a minimum viable product or service and
a proposal for further support.

The IDX Hub is very much about liberating digital possibilities.
We will partner with the best people we can find. We will develop
units of competency around digital literacy for Indigenous people
and communities and we will create and promote opportunities for
emerging Indigenous leaders through the digital space.

We are also not just staying at Redfern. There will be a mobile
hub, which will go out to communities across the country so that
mob on country can get exactly the same experience as those who
visit the hub in Redfern. It's an exciting and forward looking initia-
tive and that is the way it should be.

* * *

It is impossible to comprehend the potential benefits digital
technologies offer Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The
rate of change is so rapid in the digital sector that it is demanding to
stay abreast of the latest technologies and applications that have the
potential to improve the way we live.

Many Indigenous people could be using and leveraging digital
technologies to maintain culture, increase learning, foster leadership
and encourage entrepreneurship. There is great potential for
Indigenous digital pioneers to ensure Indigenous individuals and
communities benefit from digital platforms and applications that
have the capacity to improve wellbeing. They also have the potential

to ensure Indigenous peoples contribute to and benefit from Australia's prosperity.

We have already seen through the Community of Excellence how young Indigenous people can use digital technology to connect with positive like-minded peers, receive guidance and advice from role models and mentors, create and track personal development goals, learn new skills and build professional networks. Often the crucial difference between a positive and negative digital experience is the cultural awareness and appropriateness of the digital platform. The key is Indigenous people connecting to Indigenous platforms. This leads to the ability to interact with culturally relevant media, education, entertainment and commerce. In this way Indigenous people are more likely to feel they are in a socially and culturally safe space to develop their potential and connect genuinely with family, friends and non-Indigenous people. This is the opportunity and the way to liberate digital possibilities.[3]

Digital is the language of possibility, not deficit. For us it needs to be Indigenous led but widely nurtured. It needs to occur in a safe environment, which is built on trial and error and the spirit of entre-preneurialism. The IDX Hub is encompassing all of this.

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3 This section formed part of NCIE's Indigenous Digital Excellence Flagship Proposal 2013 to the Telstra Foundation with minor edits.

Reflections on Engaging with the Indigenous Digital World

Luke Pearson

My name is Luke Pearson. I am a teacher, public speaker, online campaigner and digital strategist, although I am perhaps more widely known as the creator of the social media project @IndigenousX.

I was involved in the lead up to the IDEA (Indigenous Digital Excellence Agenda[1]) Summit mentioned in several of these essays via an ongoing online conversation which I led, mainly on Twitter. My role was to get people contributing ideas, hopes, fears and resources to be considered by the IDEA team and participants during the forum and beyond – all online.

1 The Indigenous Digital Excellence Agenda Summit was launched in January 2013 and held in June 2013 by the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence with the support of the Telstra Foundation. Outcomes are discussed in Jason Glanville's essay.

Generating engagement in online forums has been an important part of my existence over the past few years, and is something that has had an amazing impact on my life, my aspirations, and what I think I am capable of. It has shaped how I think about local, national and international issues, how I look at media and government, how I treat others, and how I look at the rights and responsibilities that having an online presence brings. In its simplest sense, engaging in social media has changed my life, unquestionably for the better.

I spend a fair bit of time with different individuals, groups and organisations, assisting them to make the most of the opportunities that social media presents. Not simply trying to replicate my journey online, but providing people with the tools and the understanding to find their own path and using social media to engage with their audiences, to raise the profile of their issues, campaigns, and communities.

I believe that digital technologies, and in particular social media, can be a significant tool for connection, empowerment, education, employment, the ongoing struggle for justice, and Reconciliation. In fact, whatever issue is being addressed (or is not, as the case may be), I believe the digital world can assist.

Two keys: Access and Self Efficacy

There are two main issues I deal with when trying to encourage people to engage online: access and self efficacy.

Access is simply about getting online. I have thus far been largely unable to do much about the challenge of access apart from show my solidarity to those fighting to gain access for people who are unable to capitalise on digital opportunities. This is an issue that

cannot be ignored though, or that is to say, it won't be able to be ignored much longer. And when we see people who have limited or no access to sewerage, waste collection, communications, education, healthcare, basic services, and fundamental human rights start taking their stories online we will see an opening of a Pandora's Box in our national dialogue – the likes of which has not been seen since the first cameras went out to various Aboriginal missions and reserves halfway through the last century.

Self efficacy is about believing in yourself, your voice. Engaging in online spaces is not just an issue to do with digital literacy but is heavily connected to a history of being excluded from, and ridiculed within, the national dialogue.

It takes a lot of courage for people who are not used to speaking in public to take the proverbial microphone and put their voice out there in front of others (family, friends, complete strangers, media shock jocks, and potential bosses alike) if they feel that they are unlikely to be heard, respected or appreciated for their views. Being the subject of such vilification is acknowledged as potentially having a silencing affect on those who are forced to endure it. One of my greatest joys online is watching people break through this barrier.

A key component of my motivation in hosting online conversations is to be able to foster a sense of self belief in others and to show that, although it is rarely easy, it is indeed possible to forge a space for yourself online, and to use that space to educate and empower others (as well as yourself), and to put your own truth out there in a way of your own choosing, on your own terms, and in your own time.

The IDEA summit

It is always fascinating to watch and be involved in these conversations and see who supports a given concept or opposes it, how people engage or disengage with the process, embrace or reject people and ideas, what people think is possible, what people think is essential, and what people think is impossible. This conversation had no shortage of all that and more.

Leading the online conversation for the IDEA Summit was an interesting role as it gave me access to a lot of individual insights into the diverse range of views, hopes, goals, perceived obstacles and opportunities that exist among the hundreds of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike who contributed to the conversation.

This was an important conversation to have in the context of Indigenous Australia and the digital world. Indeed, the June 2013 Summit, I think, will be looked at as the start of a vital Indigenous led conversation.

There were lots of conflicting views about the interpretation and scope of what exactly is 'Indigenous Digital Excellence' and what should be on the 'Agenda'. Everything from hopes vs. fears, access vs. opportunity, remote vs. regional, social media users vs. coders and tech creators, to the role of non-Indigenous people, organisations, and government agencies within the space.

When I think back to the conversation, and consider my own views on 'what is Indigenous Digital Excellence?' and more broadly, 'what is Indigenous Excellence?' I think it is important to keep firmly in mind that my own views are just that, my own views. This has been my driving consideration in my own work with @IndigenousX, and so too with resisting the urge to qualify or quantify 'Indigenous

Excellence' to exclude any particular group, individual or particular ideology.

There is no way to specifically define the concept of Indigenous Excellence in a way that every Indigenous person will agree with, or that will encapsulate the sum total of all the competing interests, wants and needs that Indigenous communities across Australia will face as we sink deeper into the digital age. One of the greatest outcomes of the online conversation was how clearly this concept was reinforced.

How can we hope to envelop all of these competing, and at times conflicting, views within a single agenda? What will the final agenda look like? Who will 'own' it? Who will implement it? Who will act as the gatekeepers to participation within it, and what criteria will they use to decide? How difficult will it be for others to bypass these gatekeepers?

It was gratifying to see that the overwhelming majority of contributors wanted to see the best possible outcome for this initiative, and willingly contributed their ideas and honest feedback in the spirit of goodwill and collaboration. There is always a fear that public online conversations will be white-anted from those with competing interests, those who have long since been burned by past initiatives which all too often have failed to deliver, or by those who just seem to enjoy trolling online conversations.

I saw a few people from each of those categories but not from any unexpected corners, and not with any unexpected themes. Even when critical feedback or concerns were raised, they were mostly done in a proactive and respectful manner, and I would personally like to thank everyone who positively contributed to the IDEA conversation and made it a worthwhile and enjoyable experience for me, and for the IDEA participants.

Some of the comments were heartfelt stories about how engaging in the digital space has provided individuals with new possibilities, given them a voice and a sense of acknowledgement, recognition and respect. There were stories from people who have been behind the scenes of Indigenous digital tech for decades. Stories from people who have found willing audiences to engage with online, and some who have even found new careers through their online activities.

A number of the key themes still resonate with me now, writing this several months after the online conversation was wrapped up and the Summit concluded. The words are important because perhaps they are no different from any digital workshop even though they are from an Indigenous perspective:

> Improved service delivery, access, resourcing, online safety, anti-racism, language maintenance/revival, digital literacy, ownership, culturally appropriate content, education, employment, health, well-being, media representation, networking, skill sharing, inclusivity, connectedness, engagement, online activism/lobbying, e-commerce, self-determination, media creation, accessing digital services, civic participation (from grassroots advocacy to online citizen engagement with government).

All of these issues – and so much more – were raised, debated, and documented.

How these issues will be addressed through an initiative arising out of the Summit – A National Strategy for Indigenous Digital Excellence – is something that I am very excited about engaging with

when it is ready to roll-out. Whatever it looks like in its final form, I hope it remains true to the hopes of all those who contributed to the conversation, and embraces the hardest and most significant challenges faced by Indigenous peoples right across Australia.

Some of the anecdotal input still resonates very strongly with me and has had a huge impact on the way I think about social media, and digital literacy, as tools for empowerment. There's no way I can include all of these here in a single chapter, but some of the standouts include stories of:

- The power that having a voice can offer to those who have for far too long been disempowered or ignored within local, regional, and national dialogues
- The need for 'Indigenous Digital Excellence' to be Indigenous owned and delivered
- And lastly, that while it is important to look forward with hope and optimism to the future, we must not do so without acknowledging the hard work of those who have been working in the space for much longer than many of us have even been alive.

This last point is about learning from the strengths, weaknesses, successes and setbacks from the past; and collaborating with the diverse range of people who are able to make positive contributions to the future developments of Indigenous Digital Excellence.

Community of Excellence

As my role at the Summit was that of a facilitator and not a decision maker it was difficult at times for me to reconcile some of the ideals to the realities, and to ascertain what level of involvement and influence I wanted to have within the process beyond leading the online conversation and acting as a facilitator at the conference itself. I am lucky to say that I have since found a way to have more direct involvement over one specific element of the Indigenous Digital Excellence Agenda, namely the NCIE's Community of Excellence.[2]

The Community of Excellence is an online social network of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people connecting and empowering each other to achieve their goals and reach their potential. The Community of Excellence is a place for young Indigenous people, alongside mentors and role models, to co-create their futures in a social, safe and supported online environment. The network is focused on meaningful interactions, creating content with purpose and on connections and conversations that enhance personal, cultural, and professional development.

Through the Community of Excellence I have the opportunity to refine my skills in promoting, recruiting, motivating, and generating online engagement strategies. I firmly believe that the potential for an Indigenous-specific social network run by and for Indigenous people could be revolutionary in how we network, collaborate, coordinate, debate and organise collectively. It can be a tool for empowerment, education, creation, identity affirmation, cultural preservation, protection and reclamation, and for creating a sense of

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2 The Community of Excellence is an initiative of the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence and is discussed further in Jason Glanville's essay.

solidarity amongst the kindred spirits out there yearning for wider connection and opportunity.

* * *

For those who are interested in getting involved in the digital realm, whether it be through the Indigenous Digital Excellence Agenda, through another initiative, or under your own steam, I would recommend that you take the time to learn from the experiences, (the successes and the setbacks) of those around you, and those who have come before you.

I would also encourage a willingness to be flexible, but without losing sight of your purpose, motivation and intended outcomes. It can be easy to lose focus with the whirl of information and competing interests that exist within the digital space. But if you keep your grounding in yourself and in your beliefs and look to those you trust and respect for support and guidance then you can minimise the risks and protect yourself and your ideas from being misdirected or exploited.

My final piece of advice I would give to anyone who wants to invest time and effort in this space is to look after your health – mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. It is all too easy to burn yourself out online, and to walk away frustrated and disappointed with a sense of missed opportunity. It has to be an enjoyable and emotionally beneficial process for it to be sustainable over time. We need innovators, thought-leaders, educators, communicators, network builders, mediators and facilitators, not more martyrs.

Look after yourself, and those around you, and enjoy the journey.

Corporate Responsibility and Indigenous Australia

Tim O'Leary

One of the most profound questions asked by an Indigenous leader in this country was by Noel Pearson in his 2009 Quarterly Essay, "Radical Hope: Education and Equality in Australia." In *Radical Hope* – in the context of the plight of Aboriginal people – Pearson asks *what does it mean to be a serious person* and *what does it mean to be a serious people in the face of the contemporary challenges facing Indigenous Australia?*[1]

It is an important question for all Australians. It's a question that might similarly be asked of corporations. What constitutes a serious corporation? Specifically, what constitutes a serious corporation when it comes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

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1 Noel Pearson, 2009, Radical Hope: Education and Equality in Australia. Quarterly Essay, Black Inc, page 1.

The serious corporation

Pearson identifies two circumstances to be fulfilled in order to be serious. He talks first about when people live in hard places. "The harder the place the more serious must be the people." Second he talks about maintaining and transmitting "pre-modern" cultures and languages in a modern world. "The more esoteric and the less economically relevant these cultures and languages are to the imperatives of the modern, global world, the more serious the people must be in order to retain their own culture and language." Pearson describes his notion of seriousness as about orthodoxy. "A serious person ... is an orthodox person", one who adheres to custom, tradition, beliefs.

Pearson's challenge might also be extended to define a serious corporation. A serious corporation will, for example, clearly understand its role in society so it can act on this role, and be true to its customs, capabilities, values and beliefs. In effect a serious corporation will be fundamentally truthful to its *purpose*. Pearson also prompts a question about a corporation's responsibility to act on its purpose, or its role in society, not simply in a day-to-day sense, but in the hard challenges it may come across.

It follows that when it comes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, a serious corporation will live its purpose for all in society, not just the ones who are easy to reach, market to, or make money from. A serious corporation will look to the natural extent of its purpose and hold itself accountable for the opportunities it can bring to people who find themselves in hard places.

DNA

Telstra is an organisation that has always had a significant presence in the bush. Its history is about equipping Australians with telecommunication services. Whether it's that phone box in a remote community, or the radio towers you see as you go across the Nullarbor, there will be very few parts of Australia where Telstra is not present.

In fact, Telstra's history has always had a real and on-the-ground intersection with Indigenous people and Indigenous communities. This has spanned well over a century and is marked at one end by the overland telegraph, a 3,200-kilometre strand of wire completed in 1872 and laid through what would have been largely unexplored land. The line connected Darwin with Port Augusta and ultimately to the rest of the world via a submarine cable from Darwin to Java. It was commissioned by the South Australia Government and its upkeep and management found its way to the Postmaster-General's Department then to Telecom Australia, the precursor to Telstra, prior to its final replacement with microwave and fibre optic services from the 1970s to 1980s. When you are in Alice Springs you can visit the best preserved of the eleven repeater stations installed along the route to relay traffic. Each self-sufficient station was staffed by telegraphists and linesmen. The Alice Springs Telegraph Station was the first site of European settlement in Alice Springs.

Today we use vastly different technology but the challenges of geography, distance and access to tracts of land deep with history still remains the same. One of Australia's largest optic fibre and broadband infrastructure projects undertaken in recent times is the 800km of fibre optic cable laid across fragile terrain, in difficult

climatic conditions between Jabiru and Nhulunbuy in Arnhem Land. This joint Telstra, NT Government and Rio Tinto project with support from the Northern Land Council connected nine Indigenous communities and the township of Nhulunbuy to the nation's fibre optic backbone. It services just 10,000 people and is a modern-day symbol of the fundamental capability and essence of Telstra.

This has been repeated time and time again: In 1998 the then Telecom Australia completed a 314 kilometre optical cable across the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands which today connects 3,500 people across 102,650 square kilometres of land in northern South Australia and eastern Western Australia. The Groote Eylandt Fibre Project in 2010 – 95 kilometres of submarine cable and three-and-a-half kilometres of terrestrial cable to Alyangula (a partnership with IBM, BHP Billiton GEMCO and Telstra). A fixed broadband project across the 15 islands in the Torres Strait, delivered with the Torres Strait Island Regional Council. This included the completion of five high-capacity links and 15 exchange upgrades to cater for improved data speeds across these remote islands at the very top of Australia.

The few words used to describe these projects of course significantly underplays what is required to deliver them. Discussions and negotiations with land councils and local communities on where the cable can go, agreement and protocols for accessing land, deployment of construction crews over months if not years, logistics planning, then the actual connecting up of the cable, the technical support to make it work, plus the maintenance and ongoing additions to the network. Even today the liaison requirements are such that Telstra employs two people full-time in the Northern and Central Land Councils just to take care of land access and coordination issues.

Projects of this type impact the organisation; they tap into a deep and enduring connection with rural and Indigenous Australia. They are emblematic of an unbroken thread spanning the Overland Telegraph line to today's satellite communication technology. In fact it is hard to think of another corporation with such a long-standing connection.

In more recent times this has found expression with the establishment of an Indigenous Directorate within Telstra. The Indigenous Directorate was established in 2005 to work with governments and stakeholder groups to coordinate improvements to telecommunication services for remote Indigenous communities across Australia. Today the Directorate champions the availability of culturally appropriate products and services for Indigenous people living in remote communities. It supports the roll-out of new infrastructure and services to remote Indigenous communities with Government agencies where investment would otherwise be uneconomical.

There are many logistical, cultural and social factors which affect the provision and take-up of basic telephone services to more than 1,200 remote Indigenous communities throughout Australia. This has been the role of Telstra, be it from a commercial association with other organisations, from our heritage as the country's supplier of telephone services, or from Government regulations which in part direct Telstra's commitments in rural and regional Australia.

The harder it is...

But are we facing the really *hard* challenges; the difficult, the confronting and the intractable? Or, as it appears in the introduction to this essay, are we looking to the natural extent of our purpose and

holding ourselves accountable for the opportunities we can bring to people who find themselves in *hard* places?

Machado Joseph Disease (MJD) is an appalling disease. It is a hereditary neurodegenerative condition, which slowly takes away a person's ability to walk, communicate, see properly and maintain muscular control. Cruelly it leaves its victims intellectually and emotionally intact but physically incapacitated. Each child of a person who carries the defective gene has a 50% chance of developing the disease. When it passes from one generation to the next it is typically expanded, meaning symptoms appear around eight to ten years earlier than in the previous generation, and are more severe. There is no cure and if you have MJD you will be wheelchair bound and fully dependent on others for daily living activities within ten years of the symptoms first emerging. Previously known as 'Groote Eylandt Syndrome' because of the location of the majority of its sufferers, MJD has a stronghold in Aboriginal people in East Arnhem Land.

The harder the place the more serious we must be. Telstra's response here has been simple and in the scale of things, perhaps modest. But it has shown us the benefit of doing something in a hard place. We've provided the MJD Foundation with electronic tablets – to be used for building a 'speech bank', capturing phrases and everyday spoken requests before sufferers lose the capacity to speak. We had no idea that these modest devices would be used in other new and innovative ways. They have been used to make films to archive bush tucker knowledge, and to capture family histories and memories. The simple dignity of an Indigenous elder, who had lost most of her family to this disease, and her complete openness to the value of this 21st century technology, was a really powerful image

that was witnessed by the handful of Telstra executives and Board members who travelled there in mid-2013. It reinforced what we can be for Indigenous Australia.

It is not all about doing good in *hard* places. One of the tougher challenges Telstra constantly confronts is when things you would like to do don't stack up in an economic sense. There are so many remote communities in Australia that the building of a mobile network infrastructure to reach them all is fundamentally uneconomic. So how do you deal with that?

A problem shared is a problem halved. In 2013 Telstra and the Northern Territory Government announced a program to roll-out new mobile services to the remote communities of Ampilatwatja, Arlparra, Barrow Creek, Mutitjulu, Newcastle Waters, Palumpa, Papunya and Peppimenarti. New fixed broadband services would also be supplied to the Mutitjulu, Hermannsburg, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Elliott and Wadeye communities which added to the communities of Lajamanu, Kalkaringi, Papunya, Yuendumu connected a year earlier. It is doubtful that this will ever be a fully commercial service for Telstra – the population base makes this so. It would be a long essay if we had to describe what goes on in a publicly listed organisation when it comes to making semi-commercial or even uncommercial decisions. Suffice to say it is always accompanied by a high degree of debate around priorities and some soul searching. They are difficult decisions and always require a serious commitment.

A final word in this short list of hard areas is 'persistence'. There is no shortage of enthusiasm for helping with the challenges facing Indigenous Australia and frankly there is no shortage of new ideas. What corporations have not done well is staying the course around

one or two areas where they can clearly make a difference over the longer term. Five years is a minimum time horizon to tackle the *hard* issues, and it is much more likely to take ten years or more. An example here is the Telstra Community Phone program, originally started under the Australian Government's 2002 Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities. Telstra Community Phones were developed in conjunction with the Centre for Appropriate Technology based in Alice Springs for the conditions found in remote Australia. Community Phones are housed in stainless steel casings and are very robust. Telstra initially deployed 20 of these units as a pilot project. A total of 270 have now been installed in remote communities of the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia with the funding support of the Australian Government through the then Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. This represents ten years of focused activity, collaboration and persistence. These things take time. And although the thought of such phones seems antiquated in today's mobile age, these phones are an essential lifeline in very remote locations. Here mobile coverage is technically and economically challenging, and even if it is present, mobile services can be out of reach on a simple affordability basis.

Being a serious corporation

A serious corporation will be fundamentally alive to its purpose and will hold itself accountable for the opportunities it can bring to people, especially those who find themselves in the *hard* places.

Telstra's purpose is *to create a brilliant connected future, for everyone.* The nature of the challenge for Telstra as a *serious* corporation

is neatly encapsulated in the last two words of our purpose, *for everyone*. We will be most successful commercially, culturally and by reputation when we can make sure that the benefits of today's modern telecommunications environment is there for everyone. The advances in communications technology have created an arguably unprecedented situation where for the first time there is a direct link between access to telecommunication services and socioeconomic disadvantage. Telstra is in a special position to contribute broadly to those parts of the community who risk being excluded from mainstream communications technology and its benefits. This is in our DNA but it requires us to continually look in the mirror and ask whether we are lending enough of our capability to the hard challenge of making sure the benefits from access to telecommunications services are there for everyone, even to the most remote of our communities.

In 2012 Telstra became one of the first large corporations in Australia to formally recognise the Traditional Owners of land and country by installing signs of acknowledgment in all 365 Telstra stores and 88 business centres across Australia. The year also saw our most ambitious commitment yet – a five-year $5 million commitment to the Indigenous Digital Excellence (IDX) hub at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence. Both are about connection with Indigenous Australia and both reflect a rejuvenation of our seriousness.

If all else fails – get focussed

There is much more to do of course – and much more we can do.

Many words are used to describe what a corporation does under the banner of 'corporate responsibility' – sometimes too many words. Some frame corporate responsibility squarely in the 'right thing to do' category, where the broader expectation of society plays the driving role. Some speak of building strategic advantage, where social responsibility activities drive new insights and new business opportunities. Some talk about 'sustainability' where an organisation's impacts or physical footprint is examined and minimised. Still others talk about the drivers of brand reputation and the intangible benefits which can derive from a credible contribution to the social needs of a community.

Words are important: how corporate responsibility or sustainability is described or framed fundamentally drives its role in an organisation. Its framing ultimately directs strategy and, in turn, determines specific programs and activities, budgets and resources. Where you anchor corporate responsibility is therefore critical. Get it wrong and you end up with what Michael Porter and Mark Kramer memorably described as the:

> *Hodgepodge of uncoordinated CSR and philanthropic activities disconnected from the company's strategy that neither make any meaningful social impact nor strengthen the firm's long-term competitiveness.*[2]

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2 Strategy & Society, The Link Between Competitive Advantage and Corporate Social Responsibility by Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer, Harvard Business Review, December 2006, page 8.

But when you get it right, the programs will be aligned to the fundamental beliefs and strategic priorities of the organisation. This drives meaning for employees and the realisation of purpose.

In the context of business, Pearson's talk of 'orthodoxy' is also an important concept. The idea of generally approved attitudes, beliefs or modes of conduct is fundamental to the proper ordering of markets. But in the world of corporate responsibility orthodoxy is not yet settled. The role of business in addressing social or environmental challenges is still hotly debated. Whilst the Friedman view that the only social responsibility of business is to make profits is unpopular and, to a degree discredited, the challenge for corporations in balancing social/environmental considerations with commercial/economic ones is both real and contested. Perhaps, for this reason, the language of corporate responsibility also remains unsettled – is it sustainability or corporate social responsibility? Is it shared value, strategic philanthropy or enlightened self-interest? Is it some or all of these things?

Whatever the debate, Pearson, in contrast, shows us the power and insight which derives from asking a penetrating question: what does it mean to be *serious*? There is no need to look for complicated descriptions about the responsibility of a corporation. The answer does not lie in the latest idea or theory about what a corporation *should* do. It in fact lies in what has been done – within the history, culture and enduring values of a corporation, and remaining true to these now and into the future.

Postscript: A Digital Future

David Thodey

The impression I get in reading these important essays is that there is no shortage of passion when it comes to the exciting, empowering possibilities of being connected through mobile and digital services. The sobering point made here though is that clearly we have much more to do if we are to fully realise all of these opportunities for all Australians.

The authors, and many, many others, see the potential that comes from being connected because they experience those benefits first-hand every day. I have given many speeches on the benefits of digital communications and I often ask the audience to raise their hands in response to the following: "How many people have a twitter account (many), a smartphone (just about all), a TV with internet protocols (some)?" Clearly the response would be different if I were to ask these questions in some of the Indigenous communities I have visited and that are the subject of these essays.

For me this prompts an important question: what exactly is Telstra's role when it comes to addressing the barriers to digital inclusion for Indigenous Australians? You would expect me to say that we at Telstra will do all we can to address the barriers to increased digital inclusion for Indigenous Australians, that we have successful and innovative programs in place, and that our commitment can be measured in many millions of dollars. While these points are all true they really only serve to demonstrate that we recognise our responsibility. The much harder question for me as Telstra's CEO is how much *more* can we do to address digital exclusion?

The reality is that the challenges and barriers to increased connection need to be addressed by all of us – governments and businesses, communities and individuals. For Telstra, our capabilities and heritage mean we will play a big part – we think this is what being part of the community is all about. Our perspective on our responsibilities on this issue has been formed deep within our organisation and comes from an understanding of our history, our people and their values, our capabilities and our ambitions for the future.

Telstra's 'Purpose' is to *create a brilliant connected future for everyone*. Purpose, is the 'why' in what companies do, the reason we do what we do. For Telstra it gives our work meaning and guides our strategy and future direction. It also gives us a bigger ambition. The words 'for everyone' in this are crucial and given special meaning in the context of the essays in this e-book. According to the ABS, of the 250,000 or so Australian households identified as having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents, around 77,000 or just under one-third have no internet access. This compares with 17% for non-Indigenous households. Around half of all

low-income Indigenous households have no internet connection. Many Indigenous Australians are simply missing out on a 'brilliant connected future'. The time to address that is now.

So where does this leave us? In simple terms we have an inclusion problem at one end – and thanks to these essays, a problem we all now better understand. At the other end we have an aspiration for a brilliant connected future. The gap inbetween is large but not insurmountable and for Telstra's part, we have already made up our mind to do more to close it.

Our Indigenous Digital Excellence commitment is part of our strategy to address digital exclusion of many Indigenous Australians. Part of this includes building mobile and wifi infrastructure in remote communities, providing on-the-ground support where we can to address technology expertise gaps, offering cybersafety programs and resources and continuing our work to lift Indigenous employment within Telstra to leverage our national vocational footprint.

What these essays highlight is that there is still much to discuss and do if we are to bring the exciting benefits and possibilities of connection to all Australians. These essays are part of an important conversation that is underway right now, something I urge you all to join.

I look forward to reporting on Telstra's progress.

Contributors

Geoff Booth

Geoff Booth is Chairman and Director of the Telstra Foundation. Geoff has over 38 years of experience in the telecommunications industry and is widely acknowledged for his leadership and development of high-performance teams whilst maintaining strong commercial results. Geoff was appointed to the position of Group Managing Director, Telstra Country Wide in January 2006. Prior to that, Geoff spent five years as Regional Managing Director, Telstra Country Wide responsible for WA, SA and NT. During this time, Geoff worked with all levels of government, stakeholders and customers to deliver improved telecommunication services in regional and remote areas. Geoff was instrumental in establishing the Telstra Indigenous Directorate and improving the availability of broadband and mobile telephony in regional Australia. In May 2009, he was seconded to the joint Telstra board-management committee established to engage with the government on the NBN and was appointed Group Managing Director, NBN Engagement Team. He retired from Telstra on 30 June 2010.

Lauren Ganley

Lauren Ganley is a descendant of the Kamilaroi people and is the General Manager of Telstra's Indigenous Directorate. She has worked with Telstra for thirty-plus years and brings a wealth of knowledge of telecommunications and stakeholder relations to this role. She describes her job as 'pretty special' and leads programs and business activities that make a positive difference for Indigenous communities across Australia. Lauren was a member of the Expert Panel (2011) to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Australian Constitution. She is currently a Director of Kakadu Tourism and the Aboriginal Foundation of South Australia, co-convenor of the National Indigenous Corporate Network, a Fellow of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Jason Glanville

Jason Glanville is a member of the Wiradjuri peoples from south-western New South Wales. He is the inaugural CEO of the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE) based in Redfern. Prior to joining the NCIE Jason was Director of Programs and Strategy at Reconciliation Australia. Over the last 20 years Jason has worked in a range of positions in community-based Indigenous organisations, State and Federal Governments and non-government peak organisations. Jason is Chair of the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute and on the boards of Reconciliation Australia, the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre, Carriageworks and National Australia Day Council. He is a member of the editorial

board for the Journal of Indigenous Policy. Jason was a member of the Steering Committee for the creation of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. He is a member of the Museum of Contemporary Art's Indigenous Advisory Panel and a member of the University of Technology's Vice Chancellor's Indigenous Advisory Committee. In 2010 Jason was named one of Sydney Magazine's 100 most Influential People and he was featured in Boss Magazine's True Leaders list of 2011.

Jackie Huggins AM

Jackie is a respected author, academic, and recipient of the Queensland Premier's Millennium Award for Excellence in Indigenous Affairs. She was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia for services to the Indigenous community, particularly in the areas of reconciliation, social justice, literacy and women's issues. Jackie is currently a private consultant in Indigenous affairs. She was a Commissioner for Queensland for the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, and Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia. Jackie is a Director of the Telstra Foundation.

Tim O'Leary

Tim O'Leary joined Telstra in 2011 as Chief Sustainability Officer. In this role he has executive responsibility for strategic community and reputational initiatives, corporate responsibility, Telstra's environment strategy and employee sustainability. He is a Board Member of the Telstra Foundation and The Telstra Philippines Foundation. Prior to joining Telstra, Tim spent twenty years in senior Corporate

Affairs, HR and Sustainability roles at the National Australia Bank (NAB) and Mobil Oil Australia. Tim holds an Honours Degree in Arts and a postgraduate degree in Philosophy from the University of Melbourne. He is a member of Council at Newman College (University of Melbourne) and on the Board of e.motion21, a small arts organisation catering for the needs of people with Down syndrome.

Luke Pearson

Luke Pearson is an experienced educator, trainer, researcher and public speaker. He is well known and regarded for his work with his highly sought after social media project @IndigenousX, which is one of the best known and most successful Indigenous-specific social media projects to date. Since its inception Luke has worked to support a wide range of other Indigenous individuals, groups and organisations to improve their social media impact, and has also inspired the creation of a number of similar online projects and campaigns in health, journalism, and education. More recently Luke has developed partnerships which allow him to support Indigenous causes through online crowd sourcing, events, as well as online reporting and promotions. Luke has been involved in the IndigenousDX initiative since its early days and is currently working with the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence on their Indigenous specific social media platform, The Community of Excellence.

Dr Lester-Irabinna Rigney

Dr Rigney is Dean and Professor of Indigenous Education at the University of Adelaide and has worked in Aboriginal Education for over 20 years. His academic career includes former Dean and Director of WirltuYarlu and the Director of the Yunggorendi First Nations Centre at Flinders University. He has a Doctorate PhD by Research and is a Professor of Education. In 2011 he won the National Aboriginal Scholar of the Year, NAIDOC. In the same year he was appointed by the Australian Government Minister (Garrett, and now Minister Pyne) for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, to the First Peoples Education Advisory Group that advises on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood and school education. In 2011 he was appointed by the same Minister as Australian Ambassador for Aboriginal Education.

In 2009 he received an honorary United Nations award from the Australian Chapter for his work on Indigenous Education. He has been a member of several high-profile expert committees including the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare COAG 'Closing the Gap' Scientific Reference Group, the National Aboriginal Reference Group 25 year Indigenous Education Plan and Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority, National Languages Curriculum Reference Group. Professor Rigney was the inaugural Co-Chair of the Ethics Council for the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. In 2009 Professor Rigney was co-author of the review of the National Indigenous Education document Australian Directions for the Federal Government. He has worked across the Pacific on Indigenous education in New Zealand, Taiwan and Canada. Professor Rigney was a member of the Australian Institute

for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Research Advisory Committee as an expert on education and cultural transmission. His professional standing in education saw him inducted into the Australian College of Educators (ACE) in 1998. He is recognised as a national and international authority in the area of Indigenist Research Methodologies. Interest in his work by National and International universities has seen him take up several prestigious visiting scholar invitations, including Cambridge University, UK; University of Fort Hare, South Africa; and University of British Columbia, Canada. Professor Rigney is in constant demand as a commentator on national and international Indigenous matters and has published widely on Education, Languages and Knowledge transmission.

David Thodey

David Thodey is Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of Telstra. Born in Perth, David studied at Victoria University in New Zealand where he attained a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and English. He also attended the Kellogg Post-Graduate School General Management Program at Northwestern University in Chicago. A passionate technologist and advocate for corporate responsibility, David started out as a systems engineer at IBM before rising to become CEO of IBM Australia/New Zealand. David joined Telstra in 2001, serving as Group Managing Director of Telstra Mobiles where he oversaw the mass take-up of mobiles. In 2002, David was appointed Group Managing Director of Telstra Enterprise and Government, with responsibility for the company's corporate, government and large business customers in Australia and internationally. Since becoming Telstra's CEO in 2009, David

has focused on transforming the customer experience and building advocacy, driving value from Telstra's core business, and building new growth opportunities, including Asia. In January 2013, David joined the Board of the GSM Association; the global body made up of carriers and related companies that support the standardisation and deployment of mobile technology around the world. He is also co-chair of the Infrastructure and Investment Taskforce of the Australian B20 leadership group – the business advisory forum of the G20.

We all understand the power of being connected in the digital world, being on-line, with everything at our finger-tips. But what will it take to make the most of this opportunity when it comes to Indigenous Australia?

This unique set of essays, commissioned by the Telstra Foundation, shows how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people readily embrace the digital environment yet face a number of barriers too important to ignore when it comes to the opportunities of the digital economy.

Making the Connection records a range of perspectives about the path to digital excellence: from the social media practitioner to the corporate CEO; from stakeholders in remote areas to city locations; from the academic perspectives to those who will make change happen. There are hard-won lessons and questions, but there is a firm focus on the prize – digital inclusion across Indigenous Australia and the important steps needed to get there.

Jackie Coates
Telstra Foundation

ABOUT THE COVER

A record of a day's mouse track across the computer screen of Luke Pearson, an author in this series of essays, as he uses social media to deliver his message about Indigenous digital excellence.

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