

# Good Things Australia Submission: Five Pillars of Productivity

15 September 2025

[Good Things Australia](#) is a future focused digital inclusion leader. We advocate, partner, educate and innovate to ensure no one is left behind in the digital world.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Five Pillars of Productivity Growth Agenda. This brief submission outlines Good Things feedback on the following Productivity Commission interim reports:

1. Building a skilled and adaptable workforce
2. Harnessing data and digital technology

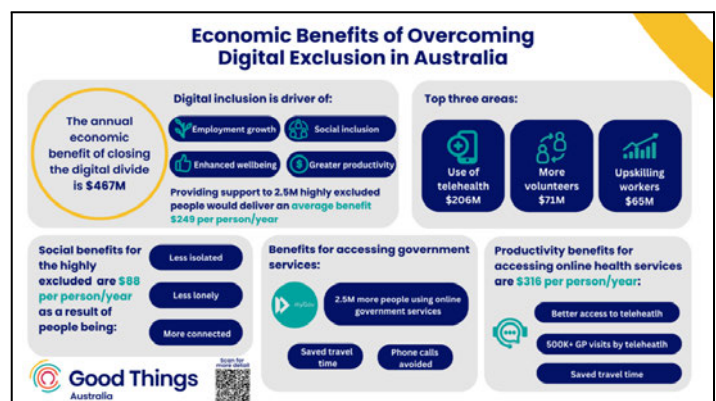
## Introduction

Australia can lift productivity through building a skilled and adaptable workforce and by harnessing data and digital technology *if* reforms deliver benefits to the people and services that need them most.

1 in 4 people in Australia are digitally excluded.<sup>1</sup> As government services, technology and the digital economy rapidly changes, it is essential that productivity measures address the digital divide and reflect the needs of all Australians so no one is left behind.

### The economic case is strong.

**Independent modelling commissioned by Good Things has found there is at least \$467.2m in annual benefits from overcoming digital exclusion.**<sup>2</sup> The same report indicates that digital inclusion is a driver of employment growth, social inclusion, enhanced well being and greater productivity.



<sup>1</sup> [Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2023](#), ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, RMIT University, Swinburne University of Technology, and Telstra 2023.

<sup>2</sup> [Economic Benefits of Overcoming Digital Exclusion](#), Good Things Australia 2024

With the rise of GenAI, the economic costs of digital exclusion will grow unless urgent action is taken. Foundational and pre-foundational digital skills are an important 'on ramp' to both an adaptable and skilled workforce, uptake of further education, and the country's ability to responsibly and capably harness data and digital technology.

## **1. Building a skilled and adaptable workforce**

The *Building a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce Interim Report* outlines a number of potentially beneficial recommendations and approaches. However, it misses the opportunity to support two key segments of Australian life:

1. The Not-For-Profit (NFP) and community sector, and its significant workforce
2. Adult workers and job seekers changing careers or needing to upskill to keep up with rapid technological advances.

The current recommendations do not account for the significant foundational and pre-foundational skills development and education provided in community settings, such as digital skills support provided by non-VET accredited organisations, and the need to support the NFP and community sector to keep up with tech.

In 2020, the Productivity Commission identified that foundational work-ready digital literacy programs need to be delivered through channels like community adult education, in addition to school and VET providers, to reach people not engaged in formal education.<sup>3</sup> Community based digital literacy provides the on ramp learning journey bridge to formal learning. Given that 63% of Australians do not feel confident they can keep up with tech and 1 in 3 worry what AI will mean for them,<sup>4</sup> this 2020 recommendation is even more relevant given the rapid digital transformation of Australia's digital economy.

The *Building a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce Interim Report* recommendations also focus solely on upskilling school teachers in AI and supporting edTech in schools and financial incentives for workforce development being limited to SMEs. It would be beneficial to make such support explicitly available for the NFP and community sector, and expand upskilling opportunities to providers of adult education. The workforce will need to be upskilled at all stages in a career, not just with youth transitioning into the workforce, to be an inclusive digital economy.

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<sup>3</sup> Productivity Commission (2020), [National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development Review: Productivity Commission Study Report](#), p. 29-30

<sup>4</sup> [Australian Attitudes to Getting Online](#), Good Things Australia 2024

## Case study: Creating a community of Digital Sisters

Community-based digital literacy programs support people most at risk of digital exclusion to unlock the potential of emerging technology, the digital economy and boost social participation. Good Things' Digital Sisters program has seen refugee and migrant women with low digital skills and confidence [build digital and AI literacy](#). 83% of participants in this program increased their knowledge of AI. 88% increased their digital skills. Further cohorts with low skills and trust in technology also need this support to safely and confidently use digital technology for social and economic participation, career progression and workforce transition.

[Learn more about Digital Sisters](#)

## 2. Harnessing data and digital technology

Good Things' welcomes the *Harnessing Data and Digital Technology Interim Report's* intent but are concerned that several recommendations in the report assume a level of capability and trust that do not yet exist for many communities. We have provided a response to the first three pillars of the report:

1. Artificial Intelligence
2. Data Access
3. Privacy Regulation

### 1. Artificial Intelligence

Good Things supports the Interim Report's focus on enabling AI, but without funding and education to build people's digital and AI ability, benefits will be uneven and public trust will be low. We recommend the Commission centres ability and digital skills support as pre-conditions for AI adoption. This aligns with the Digital Inclusion sector's call for a national approach to digital inclusion<sup>5</sup> and Good Things' evidence from community delivery.

We also support building scam resistant, plain English interfaces into government AI platforms, with warnings, suggestions and interventions at key points.

### 2. Data Access

The proposed new data access pathways underestimate the human help needed to navigate online consent and risk. We recommend a shift from 'permissive' data access to

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<sup>5</sup> [A National Approach to Digital Inclusion](#), Australia Digital Inclusion Alliance 2025

trusted & assisted data sharing, and that support for data consent and access is available in person and by phone, not just digitally.

Importantly, First Nations data sovereignty must be embedded into data access regulation, policy and processes (including specific rules around community consent, co-governance, and control).

On copyright/text and data mining (TDM), we recognise the productivity upside of AI training but do not support broad TDM exceptions without fair compensation, provenance and effective opt-outs for creators and content owners, consistent with the debate already emerging around this in the Interim Report.

### 3. Privacy Regulation

Outcomes based privacy regulation will only build trust if people have simple, enforceable rights in high risk automated decisions. A plain English explanation and proactive transparency where digital systems affect entitlements or eligibility is needed. We recommend that the Digital ID roll out includes assisted enrolment, translated content, and offline support to avoid excluding those with low skills, trust or safety concerns.

In addition to the above, this report should reference the need for:

- **Access and affordability of devices:** Device affordability and access must be treated as essential infrastructure. Good Things' supports the creation of a concessional broadband product and a National Device Bank to ensure people can actually use data driven and AI-enabled services.
- **Inclusive procurement:** Make inclusion, accessibility and online safety non-negotiable in ICT/AI procurement, particularly for high traffic online platforms (myGov, Digital ID, payments). WCAG-conformant, low literacy UX, multilingual content and scam-resistant journeys should be mandated to ensure equity of access and better online safety and risk reduction for all.

## Recommendations

To ensure productivity is boosted and fairly benefits all in Australia, Good Things recommends that the interim reports:

1. Include foundational and pre-foundational skills education in NFP and community settings to boost workforce adaptability and capability to responsibly and safely implement digital technologies.
2. Centre digital ability and digital skills support as pre-conditions for AI adoption, and mandate inclusive and trusted data sharing, sovereignty and privacy regulations.
3. Explicitly include NFP and community organisations in recommendations that provide financial incentives for SMEs and support for AI investment and upskilling initiatives.
4. Establish a National Digital Inclusion Action Plan with governmental accountability and coordination, ensuring people have the tools and skills to participate in life, learning and work and to engage in a way that minimises harms and maximises potential.

## Contact us

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