PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION INTERIM REPORT 2 – DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES & DATA

SUBMISSION TO THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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Seer Data & Analytics (Seer Data, we) is pleased to provide a submission to the Productivity Commission's Interim Report 2 – Digital Technologies and Data.

The Seer Data Platform is a data access, data sharing, and storytelling platform for people of all skillsets. Because of our reach at the local level, we work with hundreds of grassroots organisations and thousands of people around Australia.

In the last 12 months, Seer Data has helped 800 not-for-profits, community organisations, Government agencies, philanthropic grant makers and businesses create 35,000 Insights and share 6,000 data stories. We have empowered 35 communities with data sharing capabilities to make data-informed decisions to take actions for better outcomes.

We highlight the Interim Report outlines that in Australia "Excessive exclusions to data use weakens its value".

Seer Data agrees that this is the case and is calling for greater access and sharing of Government held data assets for public benefit in order to drive social outcomes, efficiencies in public sector spending, greater transparency in Government activity, and to unlock innovation at the community level.

We also acknowledge the Australian Government's goals through the Australian Data Strategy and the Data Availability & Transparency Act and associated DAT Scheme are to improve the delivery of services for Australians and drive greater efficiencies through data access and sharing, and to address the trust deficit by the citizenry related to data use and reuse.

However, we see limitations with the current Strategy that we believe will prevent realisation of the opportunity for public interest data sharing and collaboration envisioned by the Strategy, and these exclusions to data use weakens the value of it as public benefit asset.

Most importantly, the not-for-profit and private sector has been wholly precluded from participating in the data sharing scheme described in the Data Availability & Transparency Act (the Act), which is a significantly missed opportunity. The Australian Data Strategy must do more to include the not-for-profit sector in decisions related to Government data access and sharing because the sector itself delivers an estimated $80B+ from Federal and State Grants each year to the community.

Through our work at the community level, we can see Australia is on the cusp of a data revolution and we seek for greater availability of access to data to support this shift, especially now with the Federal Government able to share more data between government bodies, researchers and universities through the Data Availability & Transparency Act.

The mission of Seer Data is to democratise data and facilitate Government-to-Community (or -Citizen) sharing of data to drive desired community outcomes by giving information to not-for-profits and community groups.

Seer Data seeks for reform that includes not-for-profits and private intermediaries in sharing and access at a Federal level and to effectively "loosen the data reins" now to enable communities to take greater control of their local challenges.

Notwithstanding our conviction that private sector participation in the data sharing scheme is crucial to realising to benefits and productivity gains of community data sharing envisioned, we also recognise the need for appropriate standards and protocols to regulate the data sharing for Custodians to satisfy their obligations for protection of the data and of individuals represented in that data. We realise that robust standards and protocols are best developed on the basis of experience which takes time to accumulate.

Additionally, there are data assets that are held by other Government authorities for which an authorising sharing environment would provide improved access and unlock innovation. This data sits within State Government agencies and other national authorities, for example, the Energy Security Board and energy data assets. By a freer flow of this data and data collaboration with communities, including not for profits, First Nations organisations, the private sector and Local Governments, we will enable community-led solutions to thrive, and collaboration to lead to increased productivity, innovation and social outcomes for public benefit.

We believe the community data sovereignty movement in Australia offers enormous opportunity to democratise data and share it with the communities that could most benefit from it, which will provide greater transparency, data-informed decisions and better outcomes. It also is an enabler toward greater community-led and place-based driven funding, and policy and programming, which is emerging in its importance for the future of all communities around Australia.

Earning Trust – a deeper understanding of the Community Data Sovereignty Movement

Seer Data believes it is critical for Governments to continue to build trust with the community. Community has been excluded from the data collaboration and sharing opportunity presented by the data age, posing risks to the trust in decisions that Governments make.

We share the perspective adopted by Open data and data collaboration policy leaders around the world, and originally outlined by OpenNorth.ca, a Canadian organisation working with public, private and research partners as well as community stakeholders to foster effective, responsible and collaborative use of data and technology to solve complex problems. This perspective is that the effective nexus of public interest data collaboration includes three sectors:

- Community,
- Government,
- Academia.

In order to ensure data-informed policy actually works on the ground, communities must be empowered with data and technology to be able to realise the benefits.

Due to the fact that the DAT Act in its current form excludes access to Federal Government held data assets to not-for-profits, First Nations organisations and data intermediaries such as Seer Data & Analytics to act on behalf of its community of users means community cannot be fully enabled or informed. It also means that the trust deficit is likely to widen further as community members and citizens want agency over the data that is informing policy decisions.

We acknowledge the investments in Open data and Regional data access and we can see these assets will be important for decision making by community organisations, not-for-profits and First Nations owned and led organisations.

We are calling for making the entire Data Strategy work for *all* Australians, in particular First Nations organisations and local communities represented largely by not-for-profits.

We do not believe policy makers, data stewards or data analytics teams within Government are well informed about the community data sovereignty movement and we encourage stronger collaboration with First Nations and communities (including place-based initiatives and collective impact backbone teams and collaborations) to better understand the importance of data for shared learning to lead to systems change and ultimately better outcomes.

Investment in community data literacy and capability

Our interactions with Communities provides us with a strong understanding that there is a significant need for data literacy and capability uplift in the community that would mean all people of all skillsets could utilise Open data platforms, data sharing and data access to its greatest potential. We would like to see investment in skills building in data capabilities at the community level.

We welcome the Data Capabilities Professionals Stream which aims to train all Australian Public Service employees in 26 data capabilities, however, we believe data literacy training and capability building must extend to the broader community if we are to achieve productivity gains for Australia and improve the use of data analytics and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

We would also like to see guaranteed availability of APIs from all new and updated Open data access platforms at every level of Government to ensure that data can be quickly and easily used in applications and platforms such as the Seer Data Platform.

To support the notion of ease of extraction value from data, self-service data platforms that make it possible to search and build insights from shared data assets are a disruptive technology that give equal and fast access to information for people of all skillsets and all sectors of society. APIs will help companies like Seer Data increase the speed and usability of Open data.

In summary, we urge the Productivity Commission to consider the following as part of its review and final reporting.

1. **Data Access, Sharing and Sovereignty** - A commitment to data sharing and collaboration from all Federal and State Governments to local communities and not-for-profits to enhance community-led decision making recognising the data sovereignty of citizens and the importance of the community data sovereignty movement to democracy. We are calling for an immediate review of the DAT Act to include access for not-for-profits and companies such as Seer Data to act as intermediaries in order to take full advantage of the Federal data assets available for communities as central to the data sovereignty movement.

2. **Data Capability Building** – A commitment from Federal and State Governments to provide capability building in multiple and varied forms, including access to data communication and analysis tools, data training and incentives for employment of new data-oriented jobs at the community level. This capability building will foster innovation through the use of digital and data in communities around Australia.

3. **Data Stewardship to earn trust and understanding for and of the Community Data Sovereignty Movement** – A commitment to foster the capability within every Federal and State Government agency and Corporate Australia for the establishment of a new role, the Data Steward. The person or team responsible for ensuring data collaboration is possible and that data is Open and shared according to the SAFE principles and with trusted intermediaries with communities. This role should also understand how to interpret and translate the needs of the community data movement with the data teams within the organisation.

Seer Data & Analytics is a Sydney-based technology company turning data into action for people creating a better world. We are an Australia data company expanding to be a global business at scale that allows a broad range of people and organisations to use data to solve significant social problems and lead to better outcomes in communities.

Our mission is to make data accessible, usable, and shareable for people of all backgrounds. Our vision is to be the world's problem-solving platform for local communities.

The Seer Data Platform is a self-service data platform for data sharing. We are a data intermediator providing the discovery, exploration, and analysis of Domain Data Products within a Data Mesh architecture, and helping organisations build and share data assets for better decision making.

Seer Data hosts a catalog of Open Data alongside customers' private data, data that has been shared and data products generated by Seer Data. Users are assisted in generating their own data products by our self-service data collection and ingestion

tools, and in discovery of insights by our AI-assisted querying and Smart Insight features. Users collaborate on analyses and share their discoveries in data collaboration.

Our unique value proposition is to provide data access and sharing through safe and trusted data sharing and intermediation for local intelligence and problem solving for people of all skillsets.