



MEDIA RELEASE

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION SKILLS STRATEGY FOCUSSES ON LEAVING NO AUSTRALIAN WORKER BEHIND

12 MAY 2021

Key points

- A double disruption, the convergence of digital transformation and the global pandemic, has accelerated years of technology adoption in a matter of months.
- The [Australian Industry and Skills Committee](#) (AISC) established the Digital Transformation Expert Panel to identify what Australia's VET system needs to do to enable Australia's workforce to respond to the impact of digital change across the nation's industry.
- The Digital Transformation Expert Panel's Strategy has now been released and is available to [download here](#).

The World Economic Forum calls it 'The Great Reset'. Some refer to it as 'double disruption'. Convergence of the global pandemic and digital transformation have together hastened the adoption of technology at a rate few of us thought possible and has rapidly accelerated the future of work. In a matter of months, businesses have leapt ahead years in their digital journey.

The newly released strategy by the Digital Transformation Expert Panel, sets out what Australia's Vocational Education and Training (VET) system needs to do to support our nation's workforce through the impact of digital change underway across industry.

The Strategy emphasises that our training system needs to move quickly given predictions* that by 2034:

- Automation will displace 2.7m Australian workers
- Technology will supplement 4.5m Australian workers, leading to a 15% capacity uplift to Australian businesses.

Established in 2019 by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC), the Panel has examined the cutting-edge policy settings of several leading digital economies. Closer to home, the Panel studied what is already underway here in Australia and engaged with hundreds of key stakeholders from across the nation to understand their priorities and concerns for the workforce.

**Technology Impacts on the Australian Workforce (2020) Australian Computer Society and Faethm*



Titled 'The Learning Country' to reflect the Panel's belief that lifelong learning needs to be normalised in both policy and our culture, the Strategy comprises 11 action points, with proposals that include:

- building a national lifelong learning system
- making the VET system a key partner in Australia's Innovation Agenda
- investing in digital innovation of teaching and learning
- helping businesses understand how to develop their workforce through on-the-ground experts, and
- supporting existing workers through individualised learner support services - before, during *and* after training so that success is possible for *everyone*.

The Strategy will help realise the Government's vision that Australia become 'a leading digital economy and society by 2030' which was announced at last week's launch of the [Digital Economy Strategy](#) for Australia by the Prime Minister.

The Panel views Australia's VET system as powerful, life-changing and pivotal to optimising what technology offers our economy, the many industries it comprises and our workforce.

"Digital transformation is an era defining opportunity for our economy. It offers us the productivity leap we need but only if we upskill and reskill our workforce, and it's our training system that's central to that challenge" said Mark McKenzie, member of the AISC's Digital Transformation Expert Panel and Chair of the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia. *"The Government's Digital Technology Taskforce is working to ensure Australia is a leading digital economy by 2030 – to enable that and to remain a leading digital economy, we need to quickly shift to a system of lifelong learning"* added Mr McKenzie.

With the guiding principle of 'leave no worker behind', the Strategy emphasises that while digital transformation is synonymous with technology, it is those inherent human skills which cannot be replicated by an algorithm that will help future-proof the workforce.

"For many workers digital transformation means new or evolved digital skills, but equally and some will argue moreso, it'll demand many workers gain higher level cognitive skills. It's some of those intrinsically human skills, such as empathy and reasoning, which ironically haven't always been valued that are only going to become more and more important" said Paul Walsh, CEO of Australian Industry Standards, the organisation that has supported the Panel from its establishment in late 2019.

'The Learning Country' is available on the Digital Transformation Expert Panel's website [here](#).



About the Digital Transformation Expert Panel



Professor Aleksandar Subic is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Science, Engineering, Health and Vice President Digital Innovation at RMIT University. He is internationally recognised for his research in engineering design and advanced manufacturing, having led numerous global R&D projects in collaboration with industry leading to important translational research outcomes and impact.



Dr Claire Mason is a Principal Research Scientist at CSIRO's Data61 which is Australia's leading data innovation group and has a formal mission of creating Australia's data-driven future. Claire's research in CSIRO's Data61 supports agility and resilience in the Australian workforce by capturing novel sources of data about the changing labour market to inform the choices of job seekers, educators and employment services providers.



Mark McKenzie is Chair and Director of the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia (COSBOA). Mark is also Chief Executive Officer of the Australasian Convenience and Petroleum Marketers Association (ACAPMA), the national peak body representing the interests of the petroleum distribution and petroleum retail industry.



Megan Lilly is the Head of Workforce Development at Ai Group, Chief Executive of Ai Group Training Services (AiGTS) and the Ai Group Graduate Employment Services. Megan is one of the most highly respected people in Australia's vocational education and training sector having shaped many of the most pivotal reforms which underpin our national, industry-led VET system.



Scott Connolly is Assistant Secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). Prior to this role he was Assistant Secretary at the Transport Workers Union (TWU) Queensland branch. Scott has a Bachelor of Arts in Industrial Relations, writing his honours thesis on the ACTU and the Transport Workers Union (TWU) during the Accord, and has studied trade union leadership at the Harvard Law School.



**DIGITAL
TRANSFORMATION**
EXPERT PANEL



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About AIS

AIS is focused on future skilling of Australia's workforce. It works in partnership with industry, the VET sector and governments to further Australia's prosperity and competitiveness through lifelong learning of Australians.

AIS transforms careers through the power of skills and draws on its 20 years of world-class, in-house technical expertise and extensive industry networks to deliver solutions for industry. It undertakes research and data analysis to inform intelligence modelling; develops the national occupational standards for a range of critical industries, as well as skills and workforce development solutions – nationally and across the globe.

Australian Industry Standards Limited was funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment to support the Panel through the Training Product Development Program.



Paul Walsh is the Chief Executive Officer of Australian Industry Standards (AIS). He previously held positions in transport and logistics industry operations both as an employee and as a company owner amassing more than 30 years of experience.

Paul has extensive experience in International Skills Capability Building Projects involving the establishment of skills recognition frameworks and enabling infrastructure across APEC, IORA and Pacific Alliance regions.

Media contact

Gayle Holmik

Director of Communications

gayle.holmik@aistnds.org.au

0428 329 894