



Australian
Internet
Governance
Forum

ADELAIDE CONVENTION CENTRE

auIGF 2025 Session Report

**23-24 September 2025
Adelaide, South Australia**

Prepared by auDA acting as auIGF Secretariat

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Foreword.....	4
Day 1: Tuesday, 23 September 2025.....	6
Opening Plenary.....	6
The Commonwealth in Conversation: WSIS+20 Reflections.....	9
No One Left Behind - Digital Inclusion & AI Equity.....	11
Digital Platform Ownership - Diversity, Resilience & Trust.....	13
Multi-stakeholder ways to improve Trust.....	16
Day 2: Wednesday, 24 September 2025.....	18
Town Hall on the Position Papers	18
New Playgrounds, New Rules: Child Digital Rights & Skills.....	21
How might approaches to digital inequities from the First Peoples of Australia and indigenous communities enhance global Internet governance?.....	23
Fostering Trust Online for Australians – The Human Element.....	25
Closing Plenary.....	27
Annexes - Record of Suggestions.....	30

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Introduction

The Australian Internet Governance Forum (auIGF), formerly known as NetThing, is an annual event that provides a venue for the discussion of public policy issues pertaining to the internet in Australia.

The 2025 auIGF was a hybrid event held in Adelaide on 23 and 24 September 2025, attracting more than 200 in-person and online attendees. The forum convened participants from government, industry, civil society, academia, private sector and the technical community.

The theme for this year's event was "Global Visions, Local Impact: The Future of Australia's Digital Governance" with a focus on the following sub-themes:

- The future of Internet Governance
- Digital trust and resilience
- Sustainable digital inclusion

The auIGF 2025 Program featured seven sessions which were selected from 21 community proposals submitted in response to a [call for proposals](#).

This report presents a summary of the sessions. It captures key discussions, insights, and outcomes from each session, providing an overview of the topics explored.

Foreword

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The auIGF continues to bring together a diverse range of stakeholders to explore key issues in Internet and digital governance.

This year's event, held for the first time in Adelaide, welcomed many newcomers and fostered strong engagement across all sessions.

We extend our thanks to Uncle Mickey for his memorable Welcome to Kurna Country, to our keynote speaker Chris Buckridge, and to South Australia's Assistant Minister for AI and the Digital Economy Michael Brown MP for contributing to the opening plenary session.

”

In preparing the program, the Multistakeholder Steering Committee (MSSC) issued an open call for session proposals, attracting 22 high-quality submissions.

From these, seven sessions were selected, covering topics such as:

- updates on the WSIS+20 international Internet governance process,
- children's digital rights,
- digital inclusion and AI equity,
- platform ownership,
- digital inequities experienced by the First Peoples of Australia and other Indigenous communities, and
- multistakeholder approaches to policymaking in a rapidly evolving online environment.

As part of auIGF's ongoing evolution toward tangible outputs, participants endorsed submitting a response to the WSIS+20 process under the auIGF banner, and agreed to begin developing a Social Contract for Digital Wellbeing. This work will outline the principles, rights, and responsibilities of all stakeholders in shaping Australia's digital future and will be advanced throughout 2026.

I thank everyone who attended this year's event and our generous sponsors.

I would also like to offer my sincere gratitude to the MSSC and the Secretariat for their hard work and dedication in delivering a successful and rewarding auIGF.

Donna Austin

Day 1: Tuesday, 23 September 2025

Opening Plenary

The Welcome to Country

The Forum was grounded by a Welcome to Country delivered by Narungga Elder Michael Kumatpi Marrutya O'Brien. Uncle Mickey welcomed participants to Kurna Country by sharing the land's deep spiritual significance and his own family's cultural lineage, emphasising connection, respect, and taking only what we need. He reflects on South Australia's unique history as a planned "free colony" and Adelaide's long-standing role as a gathering place where language and knowledge were exchanged.

Drawing parallels between Aboriginal concepts and modern technology, he used cultural terms mokondu ("lightning brain") for computers and trukawika ("internal net") for Internet to highlight how colonisation and change have disrupted once harmonious systems. He encouraged unity, cultural understanding, and responsible stewardship of the digital world, closing with a blessing and the Kurna farewell nakada, meaning "see you later" in both a physical and spiritual sense.

Welcome from the auIGF Chair

Donna Austin's opening remarks highlighted both the benefits and challenges of the modern Internet. While the Internet has created significant social and economic gains and brought the world closer together, it has also produced digital inequalities and new policy issues such as cybersecurity, privacy concerns, and harmful online content.



Multistakeholder forums like the auIGF (one of many global and regional Internet Governance Forums) play an important role by bringing together government, private sector, civil society, academia, and the technical community. These groups meet on equal footing to discuss Internet governance issues and develop policies that reduce online harm without weakening the open, global nature of the Internet.

The Keynote

Keynote speaker Chris Buckridge reaffirmed the multi-stakeholder approach as the "defining outcome" of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). Chris highlighted the emergence of over 175 national, regional, and subregional Internet Governance Initiatives (NRIs), describing this as a "distributed approach which echoes the Internet itself, creating resilience, efficiency, diversity and granularity". He urged participants to contribute to the proposed social contract for digital wellbeing, recognising it as a "novel approach" that acknowledged that Internet governance is a continuous "work in progress" requiring agility.

The Opening Plenary Panel

*Speakers - Christine Runnegar, Hon Michael Brown MP, Rohan Sachdeva, Zoe Hawkins.
Moderator - Jordan Carter.*

The opening plenary panel at auIGF 2025 set the tone for the Forum by grappling with the central challenge of how Australia can secure its Internet governance future.

A recurring theme was the need to strengthen domestic capacity. Panellists warned that while Australia has a relatively mature regulatory environment, it risks becoming reliant on external expertise and technology if investment in local skills and institutions does not keep pace.

The panel also discussed contemporary tech policy issues including social media bans, institutional accountability and public confidence, highlighting that Internet governance is not only about technical safeguards, but is also about ensuring citizens (including young people) feel represented and protected.



A third strand of discussion focused on the absence of a shared national vision for Internet governance. The concept of “digital wellbeing” emerged as a potential framing, but panellists agreed that the multi-stakeholder community must articulate what this means in practice. Without such a vision, efforts risk being fragmented or reactive, especially as technologies like AI rapidly evolve.



Finally, inclusivity was positioned as essential to legitimacy. Panelists called for broader representation, including youth, Indigenous communities, and regional Australia in Internet governance discussions.

These themes will inform the auIGF’s position paperwork, and frame its contribution to regional and global Internet governance debates.

The Commonwealth in Conversation: WSIS+20 Reflections

This session was a fireside chat between William Lee from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (the Department), and Cheryl Langdon-Orr, the Chair of Internet Australia. William is an Australian Government lead on WSIS and was interviewed by Cheryl about various aspects of the WSIS+20 review.

What is WSIS?

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is a United Nations process that focuses on building an inclusive and development-oriented information society. WSIS provides government recognition of the importance of the multistakeholder approach to Internet governance, and that this is preferable to governments trying to run the Internet. This view is still not cemented and is contested across stakeholders but is the auIGF's preferred lens. WSIS also sets a digital development and transformation agenda, including through its 11 Action Lines. The process in 2025 (WSIS+20) is to review this framework.

What are some of the tensions in WSIS?

WSIS developed the working definition of Internet governance and defined stakeholder roles. There is general agreement around the importance of the Internet, but there is tension when public policy approaches step into the realm of technical experts. Tensions exist between what may be the most technically sound options for keeping the digital ecosystem running efficiently on one hand and with governments aiming to derive benefit from the Internet while also preventing harm (online harms, deepfakes) at the same time. The latter may not be the most technically efficient option but is perhaps the most equitable option. Recently, we are seeing more focus on content layer issues and governments are seeking technical solutions to solve these. WSIS is trying to show that consensus solutions can be found.



Participating in WSIS+20

The Australian government has an ongoing multistakeholder community working group sharing their ideas and providing insights. While WSIS negotiations will move to a government-led process, it is important that the multistakeholder community continues to speak up and contribute.

Some auIGF participants raised concerns about the process, noting barriers to participation including time, time zones, capability, knowledge of the process and funding. Active outreach is important to engage people but there may be insufficient incentives for the community to get involved, requiring innovative solutions to address these barriers.



The current status of the process (at September 2025)

At this stage the co-facilitators of the WSIS+20 review have released a Zero Draft, a first cut of the WSIS resolution document, and have invited comments. These will be considered by governments, represented mostly by diplomats in New York.

Find out more at <https://publicadministration.desa.un.org/wsis20>

No One Left Behind – Digital Inclusion & AI Equity

Speakers - Dane Glerum, Kim Osman, Heather Rea, Nicole Rossini. Moderator - Tim Marshall.

Why digital inclusion matters

Digital inclusion - spanning the pillars of accessibility, affordability and ability - is a crucial enabler for work, learning and life. Meanwhile, one in four Australians is digitally excluded, according to the Australian Digital Inclusion Index.

Rapid digitisation is a positive development that goes hand in hand with the reality that some people are being left even further behind. AI is emerging rapidly and accentuating the need for action on digital inclusion, particularly around literacy and critical thinking, and ensuring confidence and safety.

Addressing digital inclusion would be a game changer for Australia from both social equity and economic perspectives. For example, designing digital products and services to be more accessible benefits users, while presenting economic and business benefits through increased take-up.



Evidence-based approaches and skills

However, evidence-based contextual and human-centric co-design is important as not all communities share the same challenges or needs. For instance, The First National Digital Inclusion Advisory Group (FNDIAG) and Roadmap presents a strong example of data and community informed policy, helping to address the unique digital inclusion challenges of First Nations Australians through Target 17 of the Closing the Gap framework. One example of an advanced government policy is the NSW Digital Inclusion Strategy.

The Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance advocates for the definition and adoption of a common language and framework for digital skills from pre-foundational right through to advanced technical skills. This should be flexible to accommodate technology evolution. Such a framework would assist in goal-setting, policy development and real-world clarity in how a person might advance their skills, as required.

Suggested Government priorities and coordination

A national device bank, a concessional broadband offering and digital literacy focus, as being advocated in the digital inclusion sector, would be a good early focus of a government digital inclusion policy agenda. There is strong potential for including digital inclusion as a foundation of Australia's national AI capability plan.

Digital inclusion requires a multi-stakeholder approach, spanning multiple levels and agencies of government, business, academic and research, civil society and more. This should be the focus of the national coordination role.

Digital Platform Ownership – Diversity, Resilience & Trust

Speakers - Cameron McTernan, Terry Flew, Ram Mohan. Moderator - Victoria Fielding.

The session began with an overview of the current state of Australia's network media economy - a concept that encompasses telecommunications, traditional media and the digital platform economy. It was found that core Internet applications in the platform economy are not a competitive market, with duopolistic or near monopolistic market structures present across the domain.



The panellists each reaffirmed the need for diversity of the Internet, highlighting the cultural, democratic and economic dimensions of diversity and its value for social inclusion. Diversity also makes the Internet less susceptible to single point of failure, which helps to ensure the technical integrity of the system.

Diversity and resilience

The panel discussion highlighted that diversity is fundamental to a resilient Internet. A diverse and distributed Internet is more secure and stable, as it avoids single points of failure, whether technical (like a massive outage) or social (like censorship or the collapse of a single platform).

The idea of a single global Internet is no longer a given. The concept of the 'splinternet' was introduced, noting that geopolitical tensions are fragmenting the digital world into different spheres (e.g., open, corporatised, and regulated).

Despite this fragmentation, the Internet's design, based on 'permissionless innovation,' allows for new platforms to emerge as alternatives when existing ones lose public trust. Yet, it was acknowledged that it's difficult to compete with established giants whose value comes from their sheer size and audience.

Trust

The discussion on trust centred on its complex nature, spanning from technical reliability to human behaviour. It was noted that, at a technical level, the Internet is generally trustworthy because it's predictable and reliable—it 'just works.' However, the human and governance layers are less so.

Trust was broken down into three core pillars:

- **Expertise and Competence:** Users need to believe the systems are run by skilled people who know what they're doing.
- **Openness and Honesty:** Users must feel that the systems are transparent and not hiding their intentions.
- **Concern and Care:** Users need to perceive that the systems and platforms care for their well-being and communities.

It was stressed that this trust is fragile and can be easily eroded by data breaches, misinformation, or other abuses. Building a trustworthy Internet requires intentional efforts to be inclusive of diverse voices and to protect vulnerable groups who have historically faced discrimination.



Resilience and Future-Proofing

When discussing what a resilient Internet looks like, the speakers pointed to the need for a shift in perspective. A real-world example of how a lack of diversity and over-centralisation can lead to massive failures was cited, highlighting that a resilient Internet can 'weather challenges' and that diversity is important at every level, from a local network to a global one.

Specific areas of concern for building resilience were identified:

- **Bridging the Divide:** A disconnect exists between tech operators and policymakers. It was argued that a 'fix it as it happens' approach is no longer acceptable given how critical the Internet has become
- **Funding:** There is a lack of funding for preventative measures, with most money being allocated only after a crisis has occurred.
- **Supply Chain:** Most organisations do not map their digital supply chains, leaving them vulnerable to unaddressed risks.
- **Talent Development:** The industry relies on 'war stories' instead of formal training and curricula to build expertise in large-scale infrastructure operations.

Trust, diversity, and resilience are mutually reinforcing; building a more inclusive and resilient Internet will naturally lead to more trust and broader participation.



Multi-stakeholder Ways to Improve Trust in Australia's Digital Ecosystem

Speakers - Luke Coleman, Carol Bennett, Sam Grunhard, Bruce Tonkin, Johanna Weaver. Moderator - Narelle Clark.

This multistakeholder panel was a provocative and timely session. It grappled with trust and multistakeholder approaches to regulation in the communications sector at a time when trust seems to be at an all-time low, exacerbated by a recent, large-scale outage.

Defining trust and evolving expectations

The session started with a discussion on 'what is trust in the communications context' and whether there is a failure of trust currently. Panellists offered different perspectives between trust from the lens of infrastructure and that from the perspective of the end-user community. While panellists did not consider communications to be inherently untrustworthy, there was acknowledgement that expectations have evolved as communications has become an increasingly essential service, and therefore the need to meet community expectations of reliability and resilience. It was posited that the erosion of trust is because end-users don't feel that their expectations are being met, and there is a lack of transparency and communication to know that even where things go wrong because of the technical realities, industry is doing the right thing.



Regulation, co-regulation and multi-stakeholder approaches

The panel then moved to regulatory systems and the question of whether multi-stakeholder approaches to regulation can resolve the concerns in the telecommunications industry. The telecommunications co-regulatory system was discussed, with differing views between panellists as to its efficacy.

One panelist argued that the Telecommunications Consumer Protection Code in Australia, a self-regulatory instrument, is no longer fit for purpose. However another panelist noted that direct regulation is not a silver bullet and things can still go wrong when essential services are directly regulated, for instance the recent triple-zero outages. The Code is not a self regulated code but a voluntary co-regulated industry code that sits underneath general Australian consumer law.

Another speaker emphasised that co-regulation promotes a vibrant consumer market where quality services are offered at reasonable price points. However, while there was broad agreement between all panellists that multistakeholder consultation was essential to policy making, which already exists in the sector, there are issues that need to be addressed, including:

- the imbalance in power between stakeholder groups but also within stakeholder groups to ensure consultation is meaningful
- effects of regulation on small industry participants
- the difference between multistakeholder consultation vs multistakeholder regulation/decision-making (the latter is not defined)
- discussions about trade-offs should be had in the context of costs, heavy regulation, impact on competition.



Day 2: Wednesday, 24 September 2025

Town Hall Session on the Position Papers

The second day of the Australian Internet Governance Forum (auIGF) opened with a Town Hall session focused on two interlinked pieces of work: the updated WSIS+20 Position Paper and the proposal for a Digital Social Compact on digital wellbeing. Together, these initiatives reflect the forum's role in shaping national and international conversations on the future of Internet governance.

The Updated 2024 Position Paper

Building on the 2024 outcomes, the updated Position Paper was presented as a consensus document to inform the upcoming WSIS+20 review process.

Four key messages were highlighted:

1. Strengthening existing UN Internet governance structures rather than creating new ones, to avoid duplication and fragmentation.
2. Securing the continuation, evolution, and resourcing of the IGF, recognising both its achievements and its challenges in funding and operational sustainability.
3. Embedding meaningful multi-stakeholder participation, ensuring that contributions from diverse actors are substantively considered, not merely symbolic.
4. Ensuring robust inclusion in the 2027 UN review of the Global Digital Compact, while avoiding overlap with existing WSIS mechanisms.

Participants supported these messages as practical contributions to global processes and as a valuable reflection of the broad alignment within Australia's Internet governance community.



The Proposal for a Social Contract for Digital Wellbeing

The second part of the session explored an emerging proposal for a Social Contract for Digital Wellbeing, a framework articulating the principles, rights, and responsibilities of all stakeholders in shaping Australia's digital future.

The Contract would seek to move beyond individual responsibility, industry self-regulation, or top-down government control, instead promoting a balanced, collective approach.

The rationale for the Contract stems from rapid technological change, rising public policy challenges, and the need to balance innovation with public interest safeguards.

Desired outcomes include empowered users, enhanced trust in technology and institutions, stronger consumer choice, and effective protections for rights.

Discussion and Feedback

The open floor discussion revealed strong interest in further developing the Contract, with several recurring themes:

Representation and outreach: Many participants emphasised the need to involve stakeholders not currently engaged in Internet governance, including civil society, small businesses, First Nations communities, and marginalised groups.

Clarity and scope: Some called for a sharper definition of “digital wellbeing” and for the Contract to articulate clear, practical norms of behaviour—such as transparency in online terms and conditions—rather than attempting to “boil the ocean.”

Expertise and authority: While community input is critical, participants noted that a core expert group is needed to frame trade-offs and provide the technical and policy rigour required for impact.

Culture and enforcement: Several speakers cautioned that principles alone are insufficient without mechanisms, whether cultural, community-driven, or regulatory, that ensure adoption and accountability.

Long-term trajectory: There was recognition that this work will take time. While a first draft could be developed in the next year, a fully realised Contract may require a two-year or longer process.

Consensus and Next Steps

By the close of the session, a clear consensus among participants supported pursuing the Contract. While acknowledging challenges around scope, representation, and enforcement, there was agreement that the auIGF is well placed to initiate and coordinate a national conversation.

This session highlighted the value of auIGF as a forum where diverse voices can align around common messages, influence international processes, and set an agenda for collaborative work at home.

The commitment to revisiting progress at next year's auIGF reflects the start of long-term but promising endeavour.



New Playgrounds, New Rules: The Future of Child Digital Rights & Skills

Speakers - Jay Chew, Noelle de Guzman, Michael Des Tombe, Rury Demsey, Anna Christina D'Addio. Moderators - Abdul Mateen, Ellen Dixon.

Rights of children online

This session aimed to present a contemporary discussion on child rights online including the divergence in perspectives between legislative solutions for child online protection, against child and youth needs for their digital futures. This discussion was inspired from the recent inclusion of child safety in the 2025 Internet Governance Forum's "Securing Child Safety in the Age of the Algorithms".

The session built upon the actions taken by the Government of Australia's *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024* and the Government of New Zealand's recent Inquiry into Online Harm, to enter into a multi-stakeholder discussion on child use of digital tools to accommodate child protection and empowerment.

Key discussion

The opening interactive survey employed two "Yes/No" questions to compare existing opinions of the social media ban, to the growing need to develop child and youth digital skills given technological advancements including artificial intelligence.

Q1 – social media ban effectiveness: 13.87% Yes; 77.78% No; 8.33% Unsure

Q2 – child/youth preparedness for education/workforce: 2.63% Yes; 86.84% No; 10.53% Unsure





The first panel addressed Australia and New Zealand engagement in child digital rights, identifying that there was strong community support to address online harm. Both panellists identified that legislative mechanisms often struggled to accommodate the complexity of digital tools and platforms, with varying engagement from regulatory bodies. Regional examples such as take-downs and licensing regimes were also discussed as being ineffective mechanisms to improve child safety, while also failing to increase child attentiveness to education and other activities.

The second panel provided a global position concerning existing initiatives and research on child use of digital tools. The first speaker provided an overview of existing child online protection practices, stressing the importance of a communal approach to digital safety. The second panellist linked discussion to the “new playgrounds” theme, identifying that the digital tool can be used as a pacifier for the child or a means of educational and skills-based development.



Audience engagement and conclusion

The session then moved to a Q&A session, with strong engagement from the audience. Audience perspectives identified the lack of inclusion of young people under the age of 20 in the panel being an issue, although the moderators were educators utilising digital tools with children. There was mixed opinion regarding the role family and the school played concerning online safety and the level of regulation required.

How might approaches to digital inequities from the First Peoples of Australia and indigenous communities enhance global Internet governance?

Speakers - Ana McAllister, Susan Beetson, Simon O'Toole, Andrew Molivurae. Moderator - Rose Jamieson

This session explored how approaches to addressing digital inequities experienced by First Peoples and Indigenous communities can provide critical insights for global Internet governance.

Panel discussion

The discussion noted that colonisation persists in digital spaces through data, culture and knowledge appropriation, harming Indigenous peoples online. It highlighted digital literacy gaps leading to reliance on social media without understanding cybersecurity risks, and observed that infrastructure rollouts can bypass Indigenous land rights and needs, reflecting top-down approaches rather than partnership. The burden of ongoing, often unpaid cultural education was raised, alongside recognition of Indigenous knowledge as technology (e.g., ancient fish traps) with relevance for digital governance models. Indigenous-led innovation (e.g., Spinifex glue research) was cited as a pathway to intergenerational wealth. It was argued that governance should measure equity, resilience and collective wellbeing in addition to economic or technical metrics, and that Indigenous peoples should have their own recognised governance structures within multi-stakeholder processes.

Connectivity and essential services

A key theme was the recognition that connectivity is a lifeline. For many Indigenous and remote communities, digital access determines whether families can communicate in crises, whether children can learn, and whether essential services are within reach. Yet across contexts, this access remains fragile. Real-world examples were cited to illustrate how infrastructure gaps deepen existing vulnerabilities and compound isolation.

The Beyond “inclusion”: equity, safety and representation

The panel also challenged the framing of “inclusion.” A panelist noted, inclusion too often assumes a one-size-fits-all model built on colonial systems and unconscious biases, rather than genuine partnership. Indigenous perspectives insist on equity: recognising diverse needs, cultural contexts, and the right of communities to speak for themselves. Another panelist added that affordability and safety remain pressing barriers, with Māori households disproportionately affected by “data poverty” and facing unsafe online environments that deter participation.



Exclusion by design and digital identity

Exclusion by design was another recurring concern. It was highlighted how government digital services often fail First Nations communities, particularly where trust in institutions is already fragile. As societies move towards digital identity systems, these gaps risk deepening exclusion unless addressed holistically.

What works: community-led solutions

Despite these challenges, the panel offered clear examples of what works. Community-led solutions were consistently identified as more effective and sustainable than top-down interventions. The example of a Māori-run ISP providing affordable broadband and managing household routers was cited. In Vanuatu, universal access policies and revenue-sharing models have helped extend connectivity, while new technologies such as satellite services are beginning to close gaps for schools and small businesses.

Underlying these examples is a principle of self-determination. Indigenous communities achieve stronger outcomes when empowered to design, govern, and own solutions. Investment models that allow equity ownership by Indigenous communities not only provide infrastructure but also generate intergenerational wealth and resilience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the session highlighted that digital inequities faced by First Peoples are not marginal issues but central to building a fairer, more resilient internet. By embedding Indigenous knowledge, sovereignty, and leadership within governance structures, the global Internet community can move closer to an inclusive model that reflects all peoples.

Fostering Trust Online for Australians – The Human Element

Speakers - Rachael Falk, Lizzie O'Shea, Rebecca Papillo. Moderator - Sylvia Cadena.

The contradiction between reliance on the internet and low levels of trust

The internet has revolutionised our lives. But cybercriminals adapt easily, are innovative and constantly find ways to exploit our trust. Cybercriminals have pure intent to cause harm but the rise of mis- and disinformation remains unchecked. People are opting out of online activities. If this continues, it's going to reduce the impact of the utility and benefits of the internet we rely on. People want to use the internet but want to have a reason to trust it. Our job is to listen, not just treat this as a problem. Opting out online could also be seen as a positive – with individuals recognising that if they don't trust certain platforms, they refuse to use them, prompting a need for change.

Cyber security fears

It's important for the entire Australian community to have cyber security uplifted. Enhancing cyber security can seem overwhelming, but starting small with things like passphrases and patching is a great approach. These simple solutions, as well as national campaigns - *like slip slop slap* - hold much merit.

There is a grey area with data sharing. Many organisations ask for personally identifiable information which is presented as a requirement under the guise of data collection – often these are organisations we would never usually consent to giving our data.



The pressure of keeping secure online shouldn't just sit with the individual. Privacy by design principles ensure security from the outset of certain technologies. Introducing strong privacy reforms and removing the small business exemption could be really impactful. A clear raft of reforms would incentivise industry good behaviours and hold companies accountable.

Trust in AI

There is a strong appetite for AI reform - many want regulations, the same is supported by the *Digital Lives of Australians 2025* research. Australia has high usage rates but ranks last for optimism about AI according to a recent KPMG report. It would be beneficial to have specific legislation and we should look at more ways to discuss instances of harm - there are lots of other avenues for advocating around these things. Civil society can do campaign work. Greater trust and leadership from industry would be welcome.

Trust with new technology adoption

In the *Digital Lives of Australians 2025* research, many didn't know what Digital ID was when they were asked about it. For many, the concept of a centralised ID may feel daunting - but sharing data with lots of random smaller organisations is also a risk. New technology such as Digital ID does help to improve security and data privacy but there is a low awareness and understanding. The government needs to make these benefits known so that small businesses and individuals can leverage the benefits.



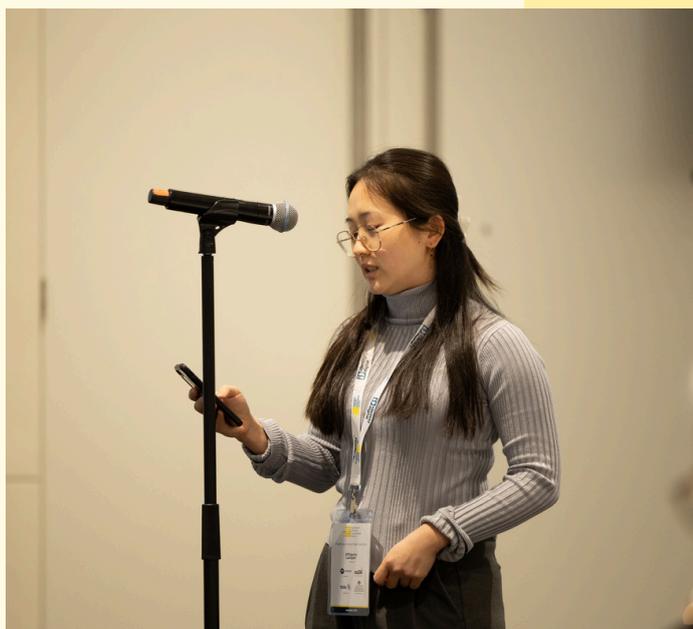
Closing Plenary

The closing plenary of the 2025 auIGF wrapped up two days of lively, thought-provoking discussion with a sense of purpose and optimism.

Rapporteurs' summaries

Rapporteurs offered a very brief summary of each session, to bring the room up to speed with key insights as it drew to a close.

The slide deck the Rapporteurs used is available [here](#). For further detail, refer to the relevant section of this Report.



The Open Mic

Participants offered comments relating to the work of the auIGF. Contributors offered the following views:

- If marginalised groups are absent from the auIGF, the space is “not safe enough yet”
- Groups or individuals without normative power should comprise at least half of multi-stakeholder group memberships, to change the terms of the discussion in a more inclusive direction
- A process improvement was requested: timestamped recordings (as in 2019)
- Consideration of the use of ROAM-X internet universal indicators
- Use of open-source communications (e.g. Matrix)
- Engaging professional facilitators to help the auIGF navigate confronting conversations
- Holding year-round “IGF-vibe” events to broaden input
- The need for participants to keep doing internet governance, within their ongoing roles and responsibilities

Closing Plenary Panel

Speakers - Ian Sheldon, Cameron McTernan, Patrick Kane, Lizzie O'Shea. Moderator - Jordan Carter.

The closing panel truly brought the room together. With a tone that was both candid and energising, panellists closed out the 2025 auIGF. Two key strategic tensions returned to the table.



First, the scope of the auIGF: does it use the term Internet governance in a more technical way (technical layers, protocols, reliability) or in a more socio-technical way (societal interactions, markets, rights)? Discussion revealed various views about what the answer should be. The auIGF today adopts the broader approach. There was agreement that the scope needs to be clearer – to participants, and to those proposing sessions.

Second, how the auIGF fits into the broader Internet governance architecture in Australia. There can be tensions between bottom-up multi-stakeholderism versus government-run consultations that sometimes borrow the label but not the method.

The auIGF's strongest contribution is to explore significant issues and bring to light underlying tensions and dilemmas. The diverse community and perspectives assembled are a good way to explore such tensions and find (and document) areas of commonality and drivers of disagreement.

From government, Ian Sheldon welcomed the “creative friction” embedding in how the auIGF works, arguing the community is mature enough to surface disagreements early so that Australian positions internationally can be grounded locally. He also urged growth in both size and diversity.



From civil society, Lizzie O’Shea committed to “disagree better”, meeting people where they are to better enable participatory governance and counter the idea that the Internet is ungoverned. Cameron McTernan encouraged the community to “keep doing this” — protecting a constructive, optimistic frame while widening who is in the room.

Patrick Kane pushed for execution on the proposed Social Contract for Digital Wellbeing: the auIGF may not solve every problem, but it can facilitate solutions by convening stakeholders across overlapping mandates to weave together common approaches to important issues.

Chair’s Closing Remarks

The Chair noted the auIGF leadership will progress the *Social Contract for Digital Wellbeing* with at least a 2026 progress report to next year’s Forum. She also noted her commitment to helping channel auIGF outputs into specialist fora.

She strongly supported commitments to better realise inclusion and safety commitments in the Forum’s own processes. The MSSC will continue through February, issue a post-event survey, host a near-term webinar and invite wider participation.

She closed by thanking all participants, speakers, sponsors, organisers and everyone involved with making auIGF 2025 in Adelaide a notable success.



Annexes: The Record of Suggestions

What is the content in the following pages?

The following pages are an informal record of suggestions and ideas heard during the course of auIGF.

They are offered for stakeholders to have a potentially helpful quick-read lens of ideas and suggestions raised in each session.

They are not an authoritative record.

Ideas may have been missed out or mis-understood by the team members recording the ideas.

Record of Suggestions

Purpose and outcomes for multi-stakeholder Internet governance

- Define the core aim: keep the Internet open, globally connected, secure, trustworthy and equitably accessible for all Australians.
- Articulate measurable outcomes: increased participation from under-represented communities; demonstrable policy inputs adopted by government; improved national digital inclusion metrics.
- Adopt a concise definition of a “good” multi-stakeholder process (integrative, power-balanced) that requires expertise, decision-making authority and transparent resourcing.
- Maintain the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) as the primary multi-stakeholder space, resist unnecessary new institutions and secure stable funding for the IGF’s evolution.

People sustainability, inclusion and capacity building

- Make “people sustainability” an organising principle: year-round outreach, funded inclusion and clear participation targets.
- Ensure panels and working groups have $\geq 50\%$ representation from voices without normative power and compensate lived-experience contributors.
- Run year-round “mini-IGFs” (youth, First Peoples, regions, SMEs) feeding short read-outs into the main forum.
- Fund community-hosted listening sessions in schools, libraries, local councils and weekend parent groups to broaden the stakeholder base.
- Prioritise capacity building across technical, policy and civic literacy with train-the-trainer delivery through community centres.
- Provide practical, low-cost inclusion measures: permanent low-cost broadband options, concessional broadband products and a national device bank.
- Example: scale successful industry programmes such as Telstra’s regional digital skills training (4,500 people) as models for partnerships.

Indigenous leadership, cultural integrity and equitable models

- Centre Indigenous-led governance and culturally safe digital platforms for remote First Nations communities.
- Support non-traditional investment models that enable First Nations equity ownership of infrastructure and cede distribution decisions to Indigenous-led organisers.
- Recognise Indigenous governance principles (seven generations) as design inputs for long-term policy and system design.
- Create a recognised Indigenous multi-stakeholder space within Internet governance structures, funded and independently organised to avoid tokenism.
- Example policy model to consider: Vanuatu's Universal Access Policy requiring operators to dedicate 4% of income to network extension.

Trust, safety, privacy and regulation

- Prioritise Privacy by Design and Secure by Design as default industry practice and remove the small-business exemption from privacy law.
- Commit to strong privacy reform that includes data minimisation and a right to delete.
- Government to lead transparent AI regulation, require organisational accountability for AI use and publish public use-case assessments.
- Explicitly map regulatory gaps and imbalances between traditional telecoms and over-the-top platforms and develop a modern regulatory approach based on end-service outcomes (e.g., iMessage vs SMS).
- Strengthen trust in telecommunications by focusing on consistent service for critical functions (e.g. Triple Zero) and by ensuring regulators can act swiftly where needed.
- Promote resilience through supply-chain mapping for critical infrastructure and formal curriculum development for Internet-scale operations.

Practical delivery: formats, outputs and next steps

- Evolve auIGF remit to cover “digital governance” while publishing a short 2026 scope note that clarifies technical Internet governance vs broader digital governance.
- Execute the Social Contract for Digital Well-being with a named owner, two-year timeline and milestones (draft → consult → pilot) and a cross-community working group.
- Improve forum accessibility and continuity: timestamp session videos, publish slide packs and session reports with stable links, maintain a single “Outputs + Actions” tracker with owners and due dates.
- Produce one-page policy briefs per theme for regulators and specialist fora and add a “What government needs to know” annex to each output.
- Commit to an iterative approach: start with simple practical principles, maintain year-round expert working groups and issue quarterly syntheses mapping auIGF insights to live policy processes.

Contact and coordination: engage with MSSC via info@auigf.au as the community entry point.



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