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Organisation Details

Is this submission presented on behalf of an organisation:

Yes

Name of organisation

The University of Melbourne

Position in organisation

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Nature of submission: public or confidential

I have read the information about this Project concerning publication, confidentiality, and privacy obligations at

Yes

I would like my submission to be treated as confidential

No

Accessible technology for people with a disability

8. What opportunities and challenges currently exist for people with disability accessing technology?

Under Article 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, states are required to promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet. This was ratified by Australia in 2008. Despite this, disability law in Australia still doesn't mention the Internet. As a result, people with a disability are unable to access many web sites and services.

a) What, if any, changes to Australian law are needed to ensure new technology is accessible?

The Australian Government should be looking at what has worked and what hasn't worked, to date, under Australian law.

What has worked:

- Disability Standards have been created in the areas of Access to Premises, Transport and Education.
- All Universities have implemented measures to comply with the Disability Standards for Education.
- The Disability Standards for Education contain very useful guidelines about consultation, reasonable adjustments and access to services.
- Some standards, such as those for Accessible Public Transport, provide quite detailed guidelines in a well-structured format.

What hasn't worked:

- There is no clear nexus between general accessibility principles and technology.
- Disability Standards are limited to only a few industries.
- The Disability Standards for Education are silent when it comes to accessing the Internet.
- The format of Disability Standards for Education is poor and doesn't lend itself to being updated.

b) What, if any, policy and other changes are needed in Australia to promote accessibility for new technology?

What needs to be improved:

- Disability Standards should be created in range of industries that operate online, such as Banking and Finance, Government, Retail, Transport, Ticketing, Hospitality and Entertainment.
- A standard format should be adopted for Disability Standards, so that clauses that are effective in one industry can potentially be used in another.

The Standards need to be specific enough to be useful. For example, the Education Standards should contain guidelines around accessible procurement that enable institutions to assess high and low risk technologies. Service access risk, in an education context, might include systems that have a large number of users, that are required for course work and that have a high degree of educational benefits. An Accessible Procurement Flowchart for education is available here: <http://go.unimelb.edu.au/bdc6>

In addition, more effort needs to be spent on improving the digital capital of

users of assistive technologies. For example, hearing loops are often provided without any information that helps users troubleshoot connection problems. e.g. What frequency is the hearing loop operating on? Where in the room do users need to be situated in order to access the loop? What instructions need to be given to presenters?

Incentives should be provided to allow expert users with lived experience need to involved at every step when developing and implementing accessibility guidelines.

10. How can the private sector be encouraged or incentivised to develop and use accessible and inclusive technology, for example, through the use of universal design?

The private sector should be invited to participate in the production of Disability Standards for a range of industries.