The Brisbane Communiqué

A Response to the Technology Outlook for Australian Tertiary Education 2012-2017

On May 10, 2012, a group of 20 tertiary education, government, and not-for-profit leaders from across Australia met in Brisbane to reflect on a new publication published by the New Media Consortium (NMC) that, for the first time, provided an uniquely Australian perspective on the likely directions of technology supporting teaching, research, and learning over the next five years. The purpose of the meeting, hosted by Griffith University and the NMC, was to discuss the results of the report and provide an authentic response to it from sector leaders. Among the key questions considered were the authenticity and credibility of the report; what were the local and national implications to the research; and most importantly, what are the opportunities for action and leadership revealed through the work.

In response to the first question, there was universal agreement — the group felt strongly the work was substantive, far-reaching, and of critical and timely importance to Australian tertiary education. The NMC Horizon Project is renowned worldwide for its deep commitment to the understanding of emerging technology, and especially its nuances for learning and research. The *Technology Outlook for Australian Tertiary Education 2012-2017* is the 25th formal report published under the banner of the NMC Horizon Project, which for more than a decade has studied the patterns of educational adoptions of new technologies. More than a million educators across the globe use the Horizon Project's research to inform planning and strategy. Australia's inclusion in this research provides an easy and practical benchmark for leaders across the country, not only within the local context, but also regionally and across the developed world.

The publication reflects a multi-year collaborative effort between the New Media Consortium (NMC), Griffith University, the University of Queensland CEIT, and a long list of not-for-profit associations and consortia within Australia to help inform Australian educational leaders about significant developments in technologies supporting teaching, learning, research, and information management in tertiary education. The research underpinning the report makes use of the NMC's Delphi-based process for bringing groups of experts to a consensus viewpoint, in this case around the impact of emerging technologies in Australian tertiary education over the next five years. All of the work produced within the project is released under liberal Creative Commons licenses that permit widespread distribution, reuse, and adaptation.

The same process used in Australia underlies the well-known *NMC Horizon Report* series, which is the most visible product of an ongoing research effort begun a decade ago to systematically identify and describe emerging technologies likely to have a large impact on education around the globe. In the 2012 Australian research cycle, which ran from February through April 2012, a carefully selected group of 41 experts considered hundreds of relevant articles, news, blog posts, research, and project examples as part of the carefully constructed process that ultimately pinpointed the top ten trends and challenges for tertiary education in Australia over the next five years, as well as the 12 most notable emerging technologies likely to impact tertiary education over that time. Since 2008, the NMC Horizon Project has included Australia in its research and reporting, coupled with New Zealand, but the *Technology Outlook for Australian Tertiary Education 2012-2017* is the first time the NMC has explored emerging technologies and forecast their potential impact expressly in an Australian context.

Of key importance to the thought leaders in attendance were the significant trends identified in the work, which led to discussions around where technology is going in Australia, and especially where the opportunities in this work might be for Australia to show leadership and initiative, to engage in thoughtful and timely research, and to create new models for learning.

Attendees underscored some key aspects of the Australian landscape, that while perhaps were assumed in the research, the group nonetheless felt they needed to be highlighted in ongoing conversations. Among them is the fact that Australia is geographically distributed and culturally diverse. Innovation and resources are not homogeneously distributed, and thus some areas of the

country and parts of the population have a very different set of challenges than the mainstream of Australian tertiary education. Even as innovation is pursued, supported, and encouraged at the national level, it is also important to consider important local realities in such conversations.

The group represented a cross section of leaders in the educational, government, and not-for-profit sectors. While only a few considered themselves to be technologically savvy, all saw clearly the benefits of technology for the constituencies they represented. All understood at a fundamental level the rationale for charting important trends and the need, as leaders, to understand what the impacts of those trends might be.

Over the course of their deliberations, the Brisbane participants saw clear implications in the research findings for local, state-level, and national educational and technological policy. A wide range of these were discussed and considered by the group. The group shared a common focus throughout the discussions and clearly looked at the findings as a roadmap for Australian leadership within all aspects of postsecondary learning. Several key opportunities were highlighted as a result.

The goal for the day was to produce this document — a communiqué to tertiary education leaders across Australia that would not simply underscore the value of the report, but extend it with a view to the opportunities that lie ahead, and to the specific challenges that must be solved in the coming five years. A range of important points was crafted by the group, and then rank ordered. The following six statements represent the group's formal response to the *Technology Outlook for Australian Tertiary Education 2012-2017* — and a call to action that springs directly from its findings:

1. **We need to ensure our policies are not barriers to educational innovation.** We need to constantly challenge our preconceptions about what is possible and what is useful, across all levels of the institution, especially as it impacts policy, planning, and budgeting models.

2. **We must craft a new narrative around what it means to be a teacher, a researcher, and a leader in today's world.** At the center of this, we must also ensure our educators all understand the fundamentals of learning and teaching. Early career teachers and researchers, especially, should be encouraged to influence innovation in both practice and theory.

3. **We need to seriously consider and understand the implications of collaboration,** its benefits and challenges, and especially the opportunities it presents for return on investment. We must leverage and share as much as we can to remain competitive and to contribute in ways the world has come to expect.

4. **There are real opportunities over the next five years for Australia.** Australia's tertiary institutions are well positioned to lead the way in key educational innovations, such as learning analytics, digital preservation, and open data — and should seize the moment to do so.

5. **There must be significant investment in new trans-Pacific telecommunications cables that connect our networks to the rest of the world.** While the investments in the national infrastructure are critically important, Australia must also add significant levels of capacity to its physical data connections to the rest of the world.

6. **We should encourage our vocational organizations, academic bodies, and educational consortia to help spread awareness of the global trends that are inexorably changing our world,** as well as to support and build understanding of the essential concepts and realities that will inform good decision making.

There is an essential optimism and can-do spirit behind the above list of points that is quintessentially Australian. Without exception, the leaders who gathered in Brisbane saw clear opportunities ahead, and saw as well what is needed to get there.

The next step is to take action — action within Australian institutions, within consortia and other tertiary organizations, and within government and funding agencies that will extend the findings of the report, enable people to understand and challenge them, and ultimately to build on them. Australia has the capacity, the talent, and the foresight to do so. All that is needed is the will.

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