



**The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600**

Dear Prime Minister,

Momentum needed to improve digital inclusion and digital transformation

We write to you in our role as Chairs of the [Charities Crisis Cabinet](#) (CCC). The CCC was formed in response to COVID-19 and its impact across the broad charities sector. Charities play a critical role in supporting and rebuilding both our communities and our economy.

COVID-19 has very clearly highlighted:

- Those without the ability to access and use digital technologies find it increasingly difficult to participate in Australia's economic and social life.
- Existing disadvantages are exacerbated by digital inequalities. This has been well demonstrated in relation to online schooling and other online services.
- Many charities have not had the capacity to pivot services and community engagement online, revealing a significant digital divide across the charities sector.

The National COVID-19 Commission acknowledged the significance of these digital issues as did the Digital Technologies Taskforce. This acknowledgement initially seemed quite promising. CCC is now concerned that momentum to meet the challenges of digital exclusion may be waning.

The CCC are committed to supporting the Australian recovery from COVID-19, but unless we address the digital divide, many charities and the communities they serve will be left behind.

It is critical that the Morrison Government leverage the development of the Digital Australia Strategy and accelerate action to address digital inclusion across Australia.

The CCC support the work of the Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance, in particular its [National Digital Inclusion Roadmap](#) and their Pre-Budget Submission (attached), emphasising the need for:

- A coordinated effort from government, industry and charities.
- A National Digital Capabilities Framework to enable government, businesses, education providers and community organisations to progress and measure digital skills development and access.
- The availability of the internet and connected devices, and the financial means to get online.

If we are to rebuild a productive Australia, a level of fundamental digital capacity is required to ensure inclusion in education, work, community engagement and volunteering.

In terms of the digital divide within the charities sector, we commend to you the [Digital Transformation Hub](#).

As you would be aware, some charities have embraced the changes thrust upon them by COVID-19, building digital capacity and expanding their services and capacity. There are also thousands of charities that have found themselves unable to transform in ways that would enable them to keep serving their communities. Many of these charities have had to put some of their programs and services into hibernation. We would like to think charities will be able to leverage their strong community connections without needing enhancements to their digital capacity, but this is simply not the case for many charities in Australia as we emerge from COVID-19.

The Digital Transformation Hub is in its early stages, having already received seed funding from partners. If the Government chose to partner and invest in the Digital Transformation Hub, the leverage created would enable a significant shift in the digital preparedness of the sector, with tangible benefits flowing to communities and the economy.

Our experience suggests that digital inclusion at a community level and across the charities sector should be a very high priority for the Government, particularly given the crucial need to boost employment and productivity.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with you and your team.

Yours sincerely



Rev Tim Costello AO
Co- Chair, Charities Crisis Cabinet
4th March 2021



Adj Prof Susan Pascoe AM
Co- Chair, Charities Crisis Cabinet
4th March 2021