

Policy position:

Digital Skills



Industry is committed to ensure that the right digital skills are identified, developed and funded through appropriate government and industry policies and legislation.

Why does this matter?

The future of work is set to undergo rapid change through the emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This means that emerging digital technologies will impact workplaces, jobs, tasks and skills. Australian workers will need basic digital skills to communicate, and interact, to find information, products and services within the next few years.

In Australia and other industrialised economies, the demand for a trained and experienced digital workforce continues to outstrip supply. This trend is accelerating. The volume of domestic ICT graduates is well below what is already needed to reach workforce targets. Continuing visa and immigration programs, designed to attract and retain world class digital talent, are critical to the research and development efforts of Australia ICT businesses.

Australia is behind other developed countries in measures such as digital employment and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills in schools. This impedes our continuing efforts in digitisation and innovation as well as growth for industry and small to medium enterprises.

Addressing the challenges

There is an immediate requirement for skilled and expert digital professionals to address the shortfall of available skills and expertise in the Australian workforce.

Multiple pathways for developing and acquiring digital skills and for retraining displaced workers require new approaches. Digital skills alone are not a guarantee of success in the workplace. Enterprise skills such as interpersonal and communication skills, problem solving, creativity and the ability to work in a team environment are equally important.

Young Australians need exposure to entrepreneurs in addition to technology, providing skills in business level innovation. Such skills proliferate where an active start-up culture is promoted, where new

companies are being created, expanded and commercialised.

There is a gap in a nationwide education campaign that targets students and their trusted career-influencers that delivers information on the creative, rewarding and engaging digital career options and multiple paths to STEM careers.

Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS) visa assessment processes, designed to bring in ICT experience to Australia, take too long. This results in competition for domestic digital talent and increases the likelihood of off-shoring of digital services.

“Fostering the skills needed for the future with the right policies, regulatory framework and funding is critical to Australia’s economic growth and productivity.”

Ron Gauci AIIA CEO

AIIA recommends:

- ✓ A national education campaign to provide immediate and on-going awareness for students, teachers, parents and career advisors about flexible learning options and multiple career paths for relevant and rewarding digital careers;
- ✓ Nationally accredited VET qualifications to respond to localised and/or unique industry demands to meet critical digital skill shortages;
- ✓ Improving policies and processes for bringing in overseas digital talent to fill targeted unmet digital skill requirements in the Australian market; and
- ✓ Continued Government support of Industry-led digital skill development, training and job placement initiatives.