



A CLOSER LOOK

Discussion paper 3, June 2012

Technology – How do we connect?

Technology has the capacity to bring about significant and profound change. Many of us use various forms of technology everyday often without realising its impact until it fails us.

Arguably two of the most important areas of technological advancement affecting cities are in the areas of communications and health.

Central to both are the advances in computing. While computers feel like they've been around forever, they look and operate very differently to how they did 30 years ago.

No longer simply a word processing tool, computers, which come in all shapes and sizes, are enabled by a vast amount of applications which ensure they can assist us in everything from running our homes, cars and businesses to alerting us when our favourite football team scores.

They have also caused a revolution in the way people connect to each other. New forms of social interaction have resulted in new protocols and ethics, many of which reflect the real time nature of exchange and therefore the challenges that come from knowing what's going on as soon as it's happened.

Another opportunity to take a CLOSER LOOK...

With Knox turning 50 in 2013, here's another deeper look at how and why we're changing — part of a series of longer discussion papers produced by Knox City Council.

Look for the other papers in the series:

- **AN INTRODUCTION TO WHAT DRIVES CHANGE**
- **IDENTITY**
- **RESOURCES**
- **POPULATION**
- **GOVERNANCE**



But while we continue to continually advance how we connect to each other, technology has had a massive impact on our health. Everything from new medicines to new diagnostic tools, from lifestyle equipment to the enabling of healthier environments means that we are living longer and therefore putting pressure on an economy and environment which is trying to catch-up.

As the Centre for Strategic and International Studies notes, *“technology will increasingly test the ability of individuals, cultures, and governments to adapt to new opportunities and dangers”*.

TECHNOLOGY AND KNOX

Communication Technology

Online communication technology has already had a massive effect on how we communicate, meet people, consume entertainment and products, and undertake business and financial transactions. The rate of change is greater than any other generation has seen and having *access* to technology is fast becoming essential to being able to operate in the world.

Home internet access was measured in the 2007 Community Indicators Victoria Survey. In Knox, 85.6% of persons lived in households that had Internet access of any form at their dwelling, compared to 84.9% in the Eastern Metro Region and the Victorian State average of 78.9%. Of the total population of Knox, 69.2% lived in households that had home Internet access via a broadband connection, compared to 70.8% in the Eastern Metro Region and the Victorian State average of 61.1%.

Boronia, The Basin and Bayswater are scheduled to be part of the first areas in Knox

to have the rollout of the National Broadband Network, with work to commence in June 2014. The entire rollout is scheduled to take around ten years, which has the potential to create a ‘gap’ for communities which do not have access to this improved infrastructure in the mean time.

A lack of access to online technology can lead to social isolation and the experience of ‘being left behind’. It has the potential to impede the ability to do everyday tasks, such as banking. A somewhat novel example of this is the decline of the ‘cheque’ in Australia, as reported recently by the Australian Payments Clearing Association. The usage of cheques has decreased by 60% in the last 10 years, with the advent of online transfers, and almost 50% of cheque accounts in Australia are held by people over 60. Credit and debit cards may be made obsolete through developments in mobile technology. Such technological advances have the potential to increasingly alienate already vulnerable communities.

‘Social Media’ has transformed how a whole generation sees themselves, their relationships and the nature of the world they inhabit. For many people, the concept of ‘community’ includes a virtual community found online. Social media websites - such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest - are hugely beneficial in that they allow people to stay connected and to reconnect. They provide a way of creating community around interests, issues and campaigns.

Increasingly social media is being used as a powerful marketing tool for small businesses and large corporations. However, the ‘social norms’ we are used to in everyday life have not translated to virtual communication and



users can be exposed to threats such as abuse, stalking, and identity theft.

Communication technology has allowed greater engagement with national and global issues than we have ever known (eg. the activist site GetUp! boasts 600,000+ members). The technology fosters both social and political engagement. All levels of government including local councils are increasingly turning to online technology to engage with communities.

However, an overreliance on this approach risks further disenfranchising people without ready access to, and capacity with the technology. This is pertinent for a community such as Knox which already displays lower levels of active citizenship and engagement. Statistics demonstrate that Knox is below the Eastern Metropolitan average for citizens participation in decision making - 'opportunities to have a say on issues' and 'membership on a local decision making body' (Dept of Planning & Community Development, 2008). It is the responsibility of governments (more so than business) to harness the efficiency afforded by technology with the need to communicate through multiple avenues to ensure equity.

Health Technology

Medical technology contributes to both increased life expectancy and improved quality of life. It has a profound effect on our population broadly and the way we live as individuals.

Australian life expectancy improved vastly during the 20th century, with an increase of 21.4 years for males and 23.3 years for females over the period 1901-2000 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare). Between 1970 and 2004, mortality rates for the over-50s dropped significantly. The now-retiring Baby Boomers are set to live longer than previous generations, thanks in part to advances in medical technology. Notably, life expectancy for females in Knox (82.7 years) for the period 2002-2006 is *significantly below* the state estimate (84 years) whereas life expectancy among males in Knox (79.2 years) is not significantly different to the life expectancy for all males in Victoria for the same five year period (79.3 years) (Community Indicators Victoria).

Technology has prolonged and largely improved the lives of people with disabilities and serious illness. Greater survival rates of disability, disease and trauma, and a general population which is living longer, creates a greater need for society and communities to provide for people with particular needs. There are clear implications for governments associated with planning for and funding health and aged care services and disability services, which will only increase and diversify in the future.



Things to think about. . .

- Do you think technology is important to our quality of life? If so, why? If not, why not?
- What opportunities do you think technology can have for the way we live and connect?
- Are you satisfied with your access to technology like the internet/mobile phone coverage? If no, why?
- Have you benefitted from access to new health technologies? If so, how?
- Is it important that the Knox community has immediate access to new health technologies? If so, where should they go?

You are welcome to send your thoughts to: yourthoughts@knox.vic.gov.au or visit: www.knox.vic.gov.au/knox50

For further information please contact Knox City Council on **9298 8000** or email: yourthoughts@knox.vic.gov.au

You can also visit Council's website: www.knox.vic.gov.au/knox50

Knox City Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the City of Knox, the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people.

Please Note: Some of the information contained in this discussion paper will be updated following the release of the 2011 Census data.

