

## INTERFACE: TECH TRENDS

## BUILDING THE E-CBD

The digital economy is on the rise but how do we build momentum to spread the benefits? There are billions of good reasons to make it work, **Rachel Botsman** reports

RESEARCH BY Deloitte Access Economics estimates the internet contributes \$50 billion to Australia's GDP – about the same as the retail and iron-ore export sectors. Numbers like this reinforce the need for initiatives that help generate awareness of the benefits of collaboration in the new economy. One example is Digital Sydney, a new industry community supported by the NSW government with a \$1.5 million investment to help the country's largest capital become a leading digital metropolis. We asked four members of Digital Sydney's advisory team about what is required to make Sydney a global magnet for tech investment and how such growth in one city can ripple across Australia.

## DIGITAL SYDNEY ADVISORY TEAM

**Hael Kobayashi:** associate director, Creative Industries Innovation Centre, UTS

**Jane de Gault:** corporate affairs manager, Telstra

**Peter Giles:** head of digital media, Australian Film Television and Radio School

**Anna Hildebrandt:** marketing manager, Fuel VFX

**What do you see as the number one priority to help Sydney become a top-ranked digital city?**

**Kobayashi:** A synchronised strategy across industry, government and education, enabled by an ecosystem with free Wi-Fi access for greater Sydney.

**de Gault:** We need to provide greater support and opportunities for entrepreneurs and start-ups. One great idea that came out of the group was a hub/incubator – where allied start-up businesses are supported with office infrastructure and community intelligence is developed.

**New York has undergone a massive reinvention as the city for a new generation of tech entrepreneurs and start-ups. What can Sydney learn from NYC?**

**Hildebrandt:** NYC is the mother of reinvention. I like that it has recently appointed a chief digital officer,

is collaborating with successful social networking businesses and is targeting its efforts towards all New Yorkers, not just people working in digital.

**Giles:** [Sydney can learn to] be courageous enough to admit that some of our processes are not working. Continuous innovation starts from identifying problems and canvassing solutions from a wide range of people. New York Mayor [Michael] Bloomberg has championed this process and it works only if it comes from the top.

**What are the immediate opportunities for technology to drive growth, create jobs and enable innovation in Australia?**

**Kobayashi:** Increase the number of well-designed digital literacy initiatives, share expertise on human interface technology and facilitate a country of creative innovators.

**Giles:** It's all about how we use technology, not the technologies themselves. We need to ask what new types of content do new technologies enable and how can we go about creating them. Compelling services can improve people's lives.

**Name an Australian tech-driven start-up or digital innovation within a big organisation that you think has a lot of potential for users.**

**Kobayashi:** Steam Engine, Mobile Screenfest [and] "Aviator" technology.

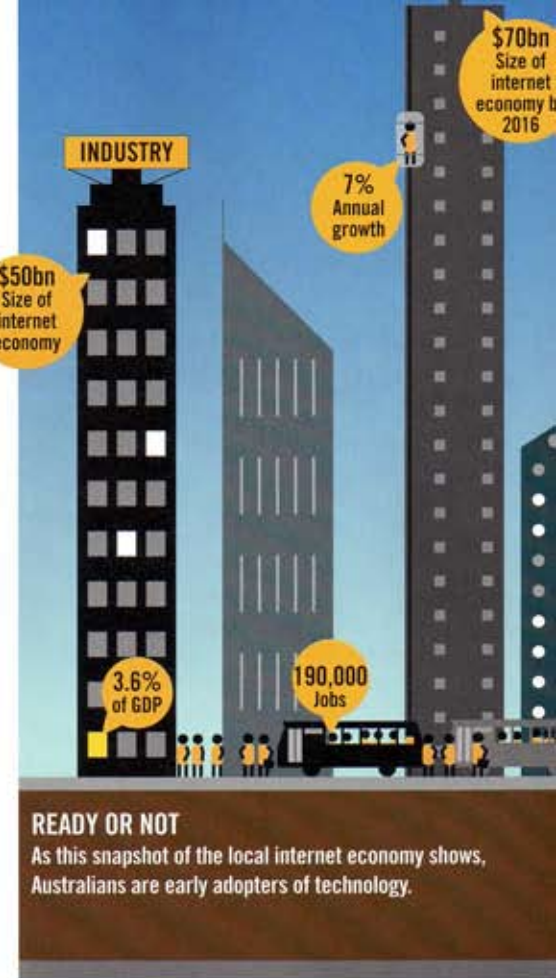
**de Gault:** I was recently introduced to a Taggle System. It can track livestock, read water levels and remotely monitor irrigation and soil. The information can be relayed back to the receiver via the internet, and/or mobile phone SMS.

**Giles:** Investment has always been a big stumbling block to getting Australian start-ups off the ground. I'm very interested in crowdsourced investment and have been following pozible.com with interest.

**What challenge in Australia would you like to see addressed or reinvented by technology, and why?**

**Kobayashi:** Education. It is more about transformation than re-invention.

**de Gault:** I've spent a lot of time in the Northern Territory and have seen the positive difference access to technology can make for people who live in isolated communities. It can improve education,



## READY OR NOT

As this snapshot of the local internet economy shows, Australians are early adopters of technology.

\*LOWEST FOR STATES/TERRITORIES. \*\*HIGHEST AMONG STATES/TERRITORIES.

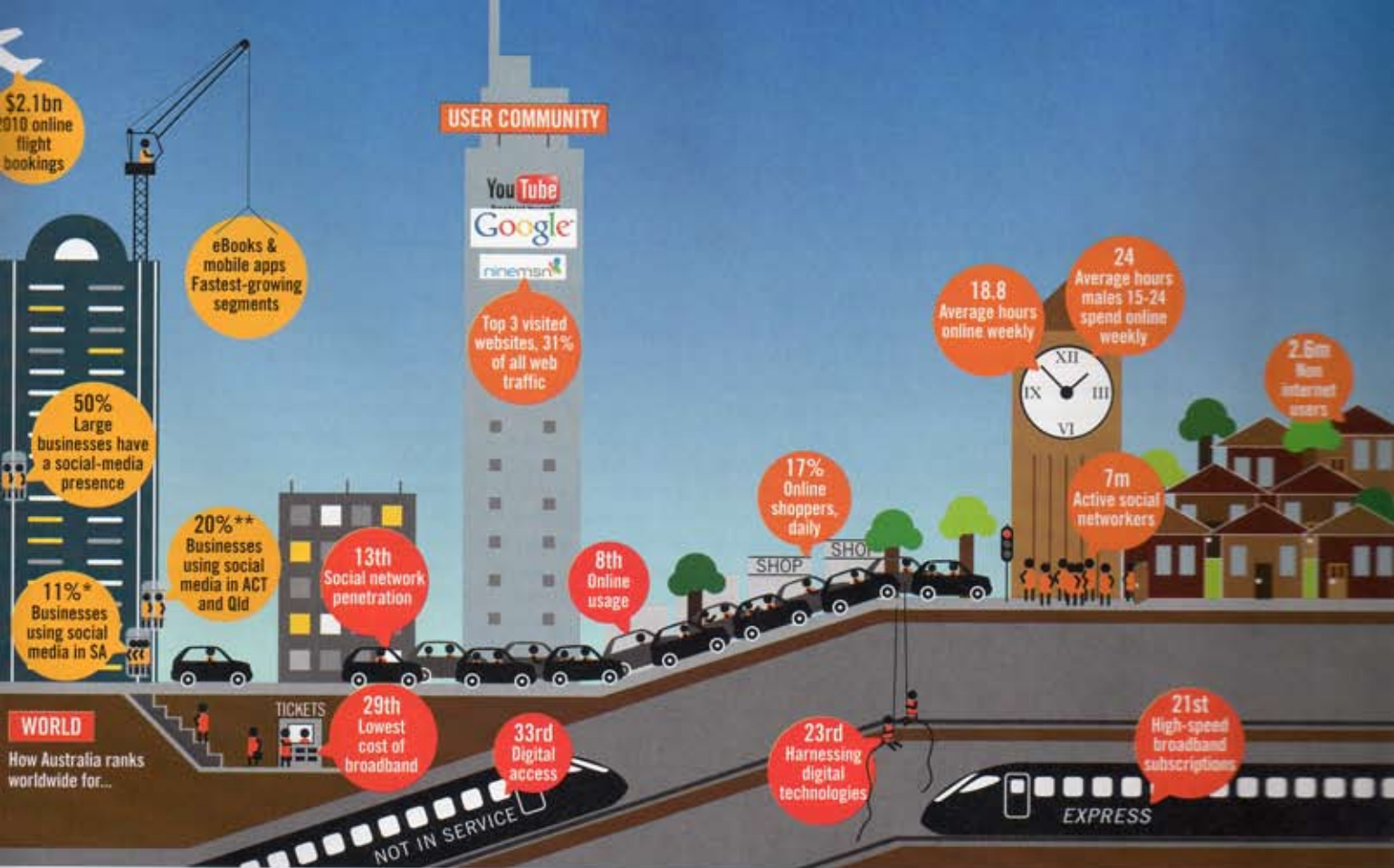
SOURCES: DELOITTE ACCESS ECONOMICS AUG 2011; SENSIS SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT, MAY 2011; GLOBAL WEB INDEX 2011; COMSCORE STATE OF THE INTERNET AUSTRALIA, FEBRUARY 2011; NSW BUSINESS SECTOR GROWTH PLAN, SEPTEMBER 2010; AUSTRALIAN COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA AUTHORITY, AUSTRALIA IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY, REPORT 2; WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

health and employment outcomes for some of the most disadvantaged people in Australia. Technology can also help those living in urban areas gain a greater understanding and respect for indigenous cultures – education isn't just one way.

**Name one idea you'd like to import or replicate that is working offshore, and explain why you think it would have real impact in Sydney.**

**Hildebrandt:** I love the idea behind TechHub in London. Providing start-ups with low-cost, physical, shared workspaces ticks so many boxes. Short-term space and facilities for lease make it easier on the hip pocket. Like-minded people share the space, which provides great opportunities for networking and collaboration. Meeting people in person, the old fashioned way!

**Giles:** I would like to see Sydney host more international events with a cross-disciplinary focus, celebrating innovation. South By Southwest [an annual series of events and performances in Austin, Texas] is a great example of a festival that has become a global focal point by embracing online innovation, independent music and filmmaking.




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