

Editorial

Building Trust in the Digital Economy

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Abstract:

This editorial comes in two parts: some remarks on government plans for the digital economy and the necessity of building trust; and a brief introduction to the papers in this issue.

Keywords: Government strategy, Trust, Editorial

Government Leadership and Trust

The role of government and maintaining and supporting trust are themes that run through many of the papers in this issue. Government is called upon not just to regulate telecommunications and the digital economy, but also to provide leadership and direction in some areas.

When telecommunications was being transformed from a government-run near monopoly to a privately owned, competitive marketplace, there were some, perhaps, who thought it would be “set and forget”: governments could mainly stand aside, keeping just a light hand on the regulatory tiller to ensure fair competition. In Australia in 2009, this view was firmly set aside by the Commonwealth (federal) Government of the time deciding to create a wholly owned government business enterprise, NBN Co Ltd, which would establish and operate a wholesale only National Broadband Network (NBN), and to give it a near monopoly of high-speed access. It has been a matter of comment, debate and political contention ever since.

That such a move would be subject to debate and political scrutiny should come as no surprise: it was ever thus. This journal issue includes a review by Professor Judith Brett ([Brett, 2022](#)) of a new book by John Doyle on telecommunications “reform” in Australia up to the introduction of full competition. The book’s title, *Crossed Lines: Disruption, Politics and Reshaping Australian Telecommunications*, hints at the nature of the “reform” process. While politics plays a part, Professor Brett in her review expresses the view that “continuous

disruption [in telecommunications] is driven by relentless technological innovation to which politics has little choice but to respond” ([Brett, 2022](#), p. 97), a view undoubtedly supported by many readers of this *Journal*. Another case of a political response (in this case, Colonial politics) to technological change is described in the historical reprint ([Moorhead, 2022](#)) in this issue.

When Michelle Rowland, the Australian Minister for Communications, gave the Charles Todd Oration (a major event in the annual calendar of TelSoc, the publisher of this *Journal*), in October 2022, she indicated that she recognized the need both for enhancements to the NBN – that is, to the supply of broadband – and for building the capabilities of users and the inclusion of all in taking advantage of digital services – that is, the demand side.

The recently issued “Statement of Expectations” for NBN Co ([NBN Co, 2022](#)) by the Commonwealth Ministers for Communications and Finance is a step on the road to better supply. It is a more comprehensive document than its predecessor ([Australian Government, 2021](#)) and, while it sets expectations in many areas, it includes few real targets. It does, however, specify some peak download speeds: 1 Gbps availability for 90% of premises in the fixed-line footprint ([NBN Co, 2022](#), p. 2) and at least 50 Mbps busy-hour speed for Fixed Wireless Access (p. 4). We expect that NBN Co will define further targets and specific commitments, as it responds to the Government’s expectations.

The New Zealand Government, which seems to do well in this area, has recently issued “The Digital Strategy for Aotearoa [New Zealand]” ([NZ Government, 2022](#)). It sets out three themes – trust, inclusion and growth – the first two of which are primarily concerned with users and demand-side issues (while being underpinned by technological means). It sets out goals and measures in each area and it recognizes both challenges and opportunities. Importantly, it describes how the strategy will be put into action and how it will be adjusted as it progresses.

The New Zealand Government is right to emphasize trust. Trust is also identified as an important issue in another paper in this issue ([de Percy, Campbell & Reddy, 2022](#)) that provides an overview of both supply-side and demand-side initiatives in several countries. The New Zealand plan stands up well in comparison to the other strategies outlined in that paper.

The issue of trust also runs through other papers in this issue. Trust is an important aspect of mobile services for users ([Sahli Sassi, Hammami & Ben Lallouna Hafsia, 2022](#)); it must be supported by technology ([Abbassi, Toumi & Ben Lahmar, 2022](#)); and, in a democratic society, it is important that citizens trust the results of elections performed by digital means ([Al-Zoubi, Aldmour & Aldmour, 2022](#)).

Trust and inclusion will be major issues in the future. Governments will need to show leadership in these areas if they are to depend on digital services for their own interactions with their citizens – and if society is fully to benefit from the fast-expanding digital economy.

In This Issue

We have a strong Public Policy section in this issue with two papers. *Towards an Australian Digital Communications Strategy: Lessons from Cross-Country Case Studies* summarizes initiatives in several countries to develop and execute a strategy for supporting the digital economy. *Preserving Transparency and Integrity of Elections Utilising Blockchain Technology* describes a proposal for security of election processes and results.

In the Digital Economy section, we have one paper, on the attitudes towards, and the requirements to support, *Perceived Risk, Structural Assurance and Trust in Mobile Payments*.

In the Telecommunications section, we publish two papers. *Towards Optimization of Patients' Turnaround Time using Bluetooth Low Energy Based Solutions* outlines a method for improving processes in hospitals. *A Proposal for Dynamic and Secure Authentication in IoT Architectures Based on SDN* looks at how to secure the Internet of Things.

We publish a review, *A History of Reshaping Australian Telecommunications: A Review of John Doyle's Crossed Lines: Disruption, Politics and Reshaping Australian Telecommunications*, of a book that will be of interest to many readers of the *Journal*.

In the Biography section, we record the speeches given when *David Piltz [was] Awarded the 2022 Charles Todd Medal*.

In the History of Telecommunications section, we reprint a “historical” paper from 2010 describing the *Marconi Wireless Telegraphy Trialled in Australia* in 1906.

As always, we encourage you to consider submitting articles to the *Journal* and we welcome comments and suggestions on which topics or special issues would be of interest.

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