

Foreword

Special Issue: Women's Participation in the Digital Economy and Digital Society

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A Foreword to the Special Issue

From an early age, we tell our children that anything is possible. We instil in them the notion that, if you set your mind to something and work hard, you can do just about anything.

Yet, despite all our progress, particularly over the last few years with the acceleration of digitisation and the growth of the digital economy, women around the world continue to face barriers each and every day: Barriers in accessing reliable and affordable Internet; Barriers to developing digital literacy skills; Barriers in leadership, education and entrepreneurship. Gender bias and stereotypes still stand in the way for many.

As CEO of Australia's largest telco, I understand the value of diversity in the workplace and the significant benefits it brings to the digital economy.

This Special Issue on Women's Participation in the Digital Economy and Digital Society delves into some of the critical work being done globally to understand issues facing women as we continue to digitise, including cultural barriers, digital skills gaps, ways of working, AI and gender bias. It also looks at the important role women play in business and how a deeper understanding of technology can give them a competitive advantage.

This edition includes a broad range of interesting studies and analysis on women across the world, with one important message: more needs to be done to help support and drive women to actively participate and effectively contribute to the digital economy.

Telecommunications companies like Telstra can make a difference. Understanding where the barriers are is the first step and this issue will touch on some of these.

Addressing these barriers is next, but in isolation, our progress will be slow – let's face it, we can't solve these issues on our own.

Collaboration within markets and across the industry is critical to drive the change we need for women no matter where they are or what they do. Addressing the digital divide is not just the right thing to do, but it is also vital for continued economic growth.

We're at an incredibly unique moment in time and I'm looking ahead at the next decade as one of profound opportunity for the telco industry.

While connectivity is the bedrock of the digital economy, it is not the end point – it is just the beginning. Its true impact will be in the things it enables and that includes great industrial and social change and innovation.

Women play such a critical role in the future of the information, communications and technology industries, and this edition of the *Journal of Telecommunications and the Digital Economy* shines a light on how enhanced digital inclusiveness not only strengthens innovation and the economy but, most importantly, improves wellbeing and prosperity for the greater good of society.