Google Australia Community Engagement Report 2020

Helping Australians succeed in a digital world

Prepared by SVA Consulting for Google
August 2021

SVA Consulting

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This report has been prepared by SVA Consulting

Social Ventures Australia (SVA) is a not-for-profit organisation that works with innovative partners to invest in social change. SVA Consulting focuses solely on social impact and work with our clients and partners to increase their capacity to create positive change. Thanks to almost 20 years of working with not-for-profits, corporations, government and funders, we have developed a deep understanding of the sector and 'what works'.

Our team is passionate about what they do and use their diverse experience to work together to solve society's most pressing challenges.

For more information please visit our website at **www.socialventures.com.au/consulting** or contact us at **consulting@socialventures.com.au**

About this report

The Community Engagement Report was commissioned by Google Australia to understand how the partnerships and diverse initiatives supported by Google are making a difference for Australian small businesses, not-for-profits and communities. For this report, SVA engaged with many organisations that have worked with Google in 2020, and reviewed and analysed the investments and initiatives. The findings and stories presented in the report have been grouped under five themes which collectively provide an insight into how Google has leveraged its unique capabilities and focused its resources to help Australians succeed in a digital world.

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Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic that hit in 2020 has driven innovation and resulted in changes overnight in how governments, business, not-for-profits, communities and families approach each day. This period has highlighted that the future of life and work will be underpinned by technology, and emphasised the critical need to develop the skills in Australia to realise this technology-enabled future.

It has also become clear that digital technology is key to helping improve the lives and wellbeing of all Australians. Digital technology can enhance all aspects of people's lives, from better paying and more secure jobs, to more connected and resilient communities.
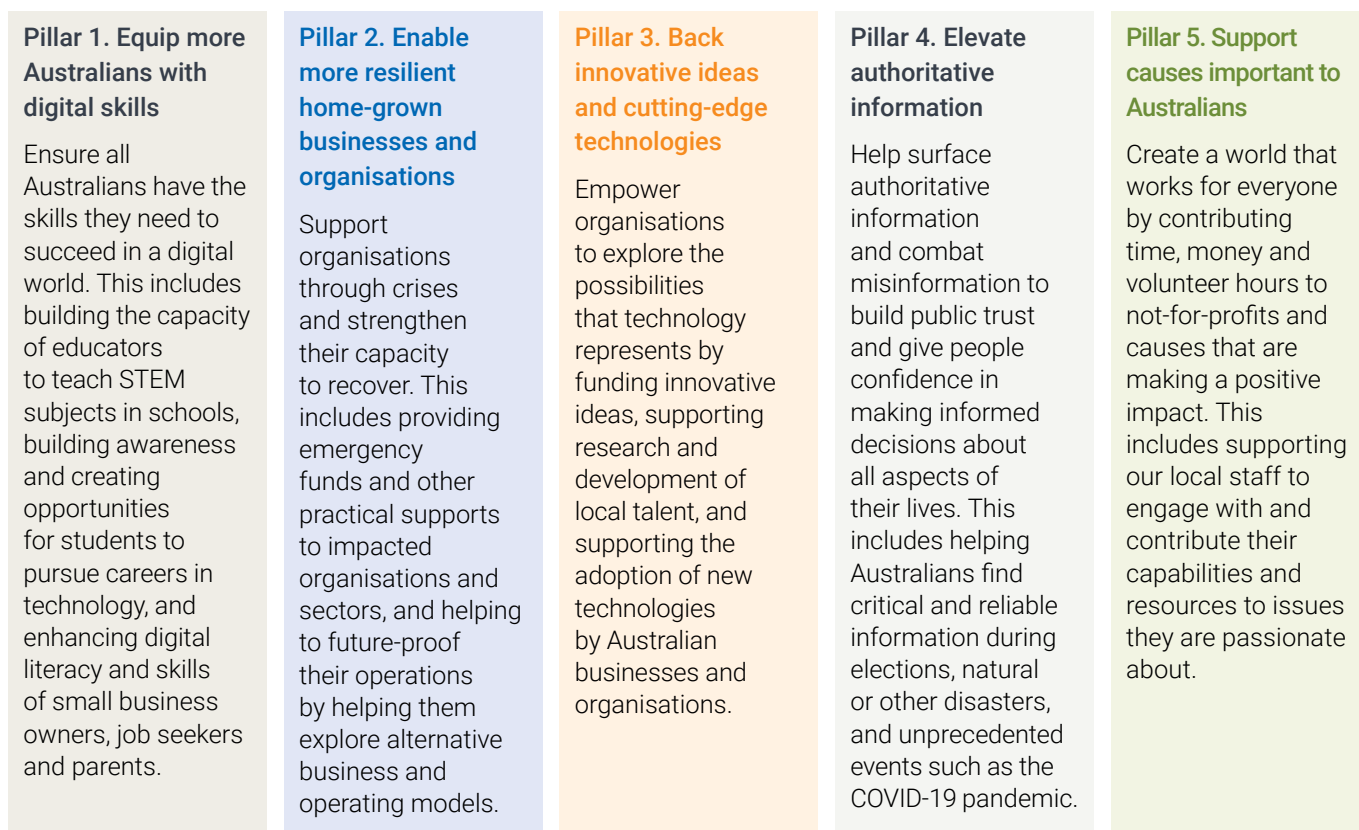
Helping Aussies succeed in a digital world

People around Australia – whether they are students, businesses, not-for-profits, educators, researchers or content creators – turn to Google tools for everyday tasks.

Google Search and Maps, advertising and productivity platforms help many organisations achieve their goals.

Along with developing new technologies, Google also invests in a range of initiatives that benefit the communities it operates in. Through its philanthropic arm Google.org and other community support initiatives, Google Australia provides funding, expertise, and access to its products and technology to community and social causes. Whilst the initiatives that Google supports are diverse and engage with many sectors and issue areas, the overarching purpose is to help prepare Australians for the opportunities of today – and tomorrow.

To deliver on this purpose, Google Australia's approach is centred around five community impact pillars (Figure 1). This report documents how Google Australia works with local communities and the not-for-profit (NFP) sector, and the impact of these initiatives during 2020 across each pillar.

Figure 1: Google Australia community impact pillars

Pillar 1. Equip more Australians with digital skills	Pillar 2. Enable more resilient home-grown businesses and organisations	Pillar 3. Back innovative ideas and cutting-edge technologies	Pillar 4. Elevate authoritative information	Pillar 5. Support causes important to Australians
Ensure all Australians have the skills they need to succeed in a digital world. This includes building the capacity of educators to teach STEM subjects in schools, building awareness and creating opportunities for students to pursue careers in technology, and enhancing digital literacy and skills of small business owners, job seekers and parents.	Support organisations through crises and strengthen their capacity to recover. This includes providing emergency funds and other practical supports to impacted organisations and sectors, and helping to future-proof their operations by helping them explore alternative business and operating models.	Empower organisations to explore the possibilities that technology represents by funding innovative ideas, supporting research and development of local talent, and supporting the adoption of new technologies by Australian businesses and organisations.	Help surface authoritative information and combat misinformation to build public trust and give people confidence in making informed decisions about all aspects of their lives. This includes helping Australians find critical and reliable information during elections, natural or other disasters, and unprecedented events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.	Create a world that works for everyone by contributing time, money and volunteer hours to not-for-profits and causes that are making a positive impact. This includes supporting our local staff to engage with and contribute their capabilities and resources to issues they are passionate about.

Highlights 2020

Equip more Australians with digital skills

Education for our educators in computer science
$350,000 worth of Educator PD Grants awarded in 2020 to **23 organisations** which delivered training to more than **5,500** teachers to enhance their ability to teach computer science (CS)

Encouraged STEM careers
Over 2,250 students supported to participate in FIRST Robotics Australia programs since 2016

Supporting online safety education to empower parents and children
$1.5 million grant provided to the Alannah and Madeline Foundation towards the development of the **eSmart Media Literacy Lab** – a media literacy education program

Enable more resilient home-grown businesses and organisations

Supporting SMEs, NFPs and the Australian Government to reach more Australians
$60 million in free advertising provided to SMEs, NFPs and the Australian Government generating a minimum of **$325 million** of economic value

Support for SME owners affected by COVID-19
$350,000 grant to Many Rivers to support businesses impacted by COVID-19. Ninety-two business owners (53% female) received funds and in-depth business coaching, and approx. 2,900 supported through the helpline

Support for artists affected by COVID-19
Over **$300,000** donated to Support Act and APRA AMCOS Sustainability Fund supporting artists, songwriters, and composers out of work due to COVID-19

Back innovative ideas and cutting-edge technologies

Innovation within newsrooms
145 regional publishers participated in **Google News Lab pilot**, an initiative aimed at building digital skills and capacity, and researching and testing of new small-scale digital publishing models

Innovation within arts & culture sector
Supported delivery of the fist-ever virtual Biennale of Sydney – NIRIN, reaching **4.8 million people** through online content

AI for Social Good
$3.37 million invested into projects that use Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to address critical social issues including development of a national suicide monitoring system powered by AI

Elevate authoritative information

Supporting fact-checking for journalists
$1.5 million invested into the **COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub** to combat misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines

Growing the largest social services directory
$275,000 in additional funding provided to Ask Izzy (Infoxchange) in 2020 to support people affected by bushfires and needing urgent support due to COVID-19

Supporting bushfires management
Developed SOS Alerts for all states impacted by the bushfires to communicate localised warning messages and bushfire advice to Australians

Support causes important to Australians

Committed funding to social causes
$6.5 million contributed to Australian NFPs during 2020, in addition to funds distributed through annual grants, sponsorship and program funding

Supporting diversity
Established $350,000 YouTube scholarship to support three students from diverse backgrounds to study at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA)

Community Impact #1

Equip more Australians with digital skills

By 2025, as many as 149 million new digital technology jobs are expected to be created worldwide.[1] It is also expected that computer literacy will become a non-negotiable requirement for 90% of roles by 2023, including in occupations as diverse as carpentry, plumbing and law.[2]

Google has both a vested interest and the capabilities to help nurture and develop a pipeline of local talent that can take up those new tech roles, and support people to acquire the skills they need to succeed in an increasingly digital world. Working from a position that equity of access and diversity are critical to creating a thriving and representative tech sector for everyone, Google targets its support to people and communities traditionally underrepresented in those fields.

The following are areas that Google prioritised during 2020 that describe its approach to delivering impact in this area for teachers, students and communities.

Computer Science (CS) education at schools

Investing in professional development and resources for teachers

Schools play a critical role in ensuring that young people develop computational skills, problem-solving skills, coding and a good understanding of STEM subjects.

Teachers can have an enormous impact on building students' confidence and skills, and can be instrumental in helping them see themselves in tech-driven industries and careers. This is why Google supports a range of professional development programs for educators and the development of computer science teaching resources. Reaching hundreds of teachers annually, these programs and tools have helped enhance teaching and learning experiences in schools across Australia.

The funds are directed to schools to address the equity gaps and improve access to quality CS education. The educational resources, such as CS Unplugged and CS First, are also made available for free for all schools and teachers to access and have been utilised by many educators as effective remote learning resources.
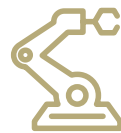
STEM careers

Promoting career pathways and diversity in digital tech roles for young people

STEM jobs are growing 1.9 times faster than other jobs, yet enrolments in STEM degrees and courses are growing much more slowly, or even declining, for women and minorities.[3]

To this end, Google supports a range of activities that aim to attract and support young people from traditionally underrepresented cohorts – such as women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and regional and remote students – to pursue their interest in technology.

This includes funding for the First Robotics Australia program through which Google supports students from regional and remote schools to take part in Australia's largest robotics competition; the Superstars of STEM program to challenge gender stereotypes about careers in technology and increase visibility of women in STEM; and regular school visits by Google staff.

Google also sponsors the Victorian Indigenous Engineering Winter School (VIEWS), the Indigenous Australian Engineering School (IAES), Indigitek and the Clontarf Foundation, which help provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to connect with other people passionate about STEM.

Digital upskilling

Support digital upskilling of job seekers and small business

People need to be digitally literate and have the digital skills to effectively participate in society and to realise available economic opportunities. However, research from Deloitte Access Economics reveals that there is a digital skills gap in Australia, especially amongst small business owners.[4]

Through the Grow with Google program, small business owners can access free resources and digital skills training. In 2020, more than 32,000 people accessed online training and a further 670 business owners attended the in-person training workshops.

To support people from marginalised communities to improve their digital skills, Google.org provided funds to initially develop, and in 2020, expand, the range of courses available through the Digital Springboard program. The program helps improve digital confidence, support transitions to work and career growth through courses that build job readiness skills, as well as more in-depth topics like social media strategy and an introduction to coding. Since 2018, the program has reached more than 10,000 people across Australia.

Online Safety

Digital skills for parents and children to stay safe online

Parents have always been concerned for digital safety of their families, and with online learning becoming a norm during 2020, these concerns have been heightened.

Google believes that education is key to helping children stay safe online. To this end, in 2020 Google continued to collaborate with a range of organisations to develop and deliver resources and programs for school-aged children that address cyberbullying, online safety and media literacy.

Google's own platforms have inbuilt security features that block potentially harmful material from being accessed by children, and Google Safety Centre also allows parents to customise access options to help them proactively manage their family's safety online.

"[In Australia], Online teaching is patchy, delayed and inconsistent. It seems to me teachers and schools are reluctant to make this transition in a productive way. Teachers are unlikely to have formal training in digital teaching and they're unlikely to get professional development in it."

Research fellow, education program at the CIS,
Glenn Fahey

CASE STUDY
Alannah & Madeline Foundation

Currently about half of Gen Z Australians use social media as their main source of news. The way they engage with news and information media is constantly evolving, and there is a growing need to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to adapt and thrive. Google.org provided a $1.5 million grant to the Alannah & Madeline Foundation (AMF) to work with leading experts and educators to develop the eSmart Media Literacy Lab, a first-of-its-kind resource for school students that equips them with the critical thinking skills needed to effectively navigate and thrive in their relationship with media in the digital environment. In addition to funding, Google.org has provided the AMF with ongoing in-kind support to nurture the eSmart Media Literacy Lab concept. The Lab was launched in July 2020 and by the end of the year already attracted registrations from over 500 schools and other educational providers.

"With the ongoing oversight of a leading Advisory Group of Australian academics and media, journalism, education and youth voice experts, the Alannah & Madeline Foundation adopts an inclusive children's rights-based approach to media literacy education. Our eSmart Media Literacy Lab was designed with young people, for young people. It can be taught across most secondary subject areas – from the sciences to humanities – helping teachers to enhance students' agency in the digital environment and strengthen their critical thinking abilities."

Ariana Kurzeme, Head of Program Design, Innovation and Advocacy, Alannah & Madeline Foundation.
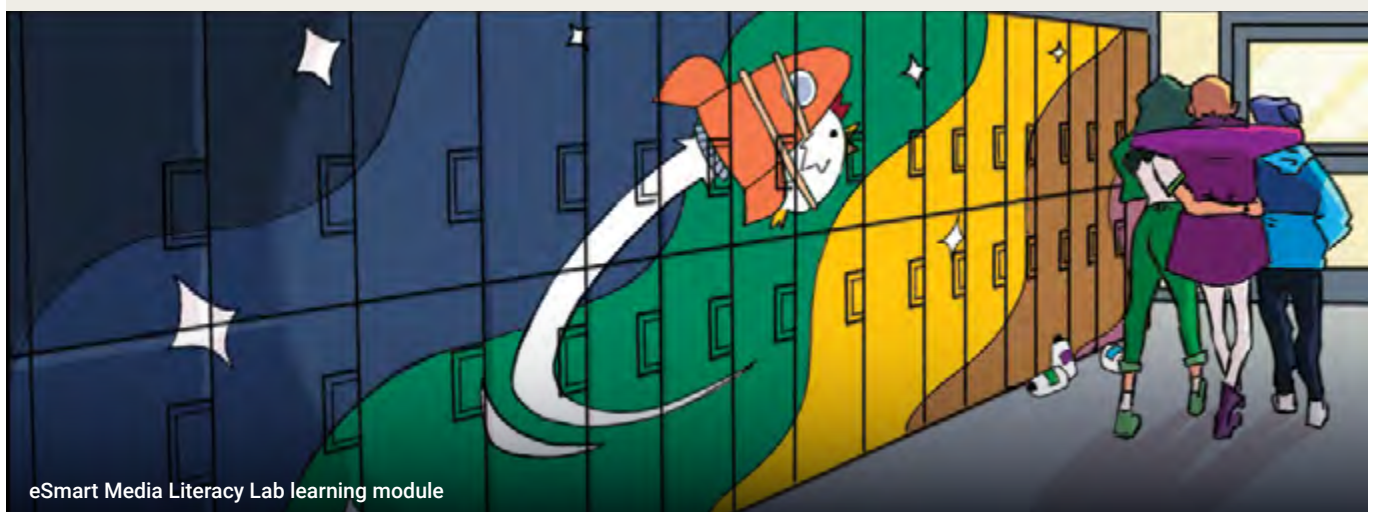
eSmart Media Literacy Lab learning module

Community Impact #2

Enable more resilient home-grown businesses and organisations

COVID-19, lockdowns and border closures have had a significant, and pervasive impact on Australia's economic performance in 2020. Millions of people lost jobs or were stood down, and a significant number of businesses, as well as entire industries, were forced to close.[5]

Recognising the need for rapid action, as well as the sustained effort required to rebuild, Google responded by extending free access to many of its products and offered emergency funds and other support to sectors impacted by the crisis. In addition, Google provided more than $60 million in free advertising to NFPs, SMEs and the government to aid in response and recovery efforts which is estimated to have generated a minimum of $325 million of economic value.[6] The following are select examples that illustrate the sectors that Google directed support to during 2020 and the impact of that support.

Small to medium enterprise (SME) support

Economic assistance to Australian small businesses and enterprises

COVID-19 put enormous pressure on many organisations as they tried to survive and adjust to the new way of working. To lessen the immediate impacts of the crisis, Google set up a range of emergency relief supports.

The COVID-19 Rapid Response and Recovery Program funded by Google.org was designed to provide urgent support to small business owners. Through the program over 2,900 small business owners, many of them female or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, received funds and business coaching from Many Rivers, a non-profit organisation that provides microenterprise development and community economic development support. Many Rivers helped these organisations make necessary changes to their strategy and operating models to set their business up for success.

A global Journalism Emergency Relief Fund was also established to support small and medium-sized news businesses producing original news for local communities. The funding was provided to 96 publications across Australia.

Not-for-profit (NFP) sector support

Helping not-for-profit organisations be more effective in delivering on their missions

Not-for-profit organisations play a critical role in our society by supporting people and causes to make a positive social impact. To help them deliver on their mission, non-profits need to raise funds, engage with their communities and deliver supports to people and areas that need it most.

Technology can play a role in helping NFPs to address these challenges. Google's productivity tools, available at no cost through the Google for Nonprofits program, had a significant impact on not-for-profits who had to pivot both their services and operations to be provided remotely. These tools have helped NFPs to work more effectively as teams, reach more people in need, increase awareness of their cause and expand their donor base. In addition, as many people in the community were looking for extra support during 2020, Google Ad Grants donations helped not-for-profits to further raise awareness of their services and to connect with new supporters.

Arts & culture sector support

Supporting digital transformation of local arts and culture events during COVID-19

The arts and culture community was hit particularly hard by COVID-19, as events had to be cancelled or postponed for most of 2020. Google partnered with the creative community to help find innovative ways to digitise content, bring festivals, events and performances online for Australians to enjoy, and creators to stay engaged with their audiences and earn income. This included supporting local cultural partners to transition in-person events to digital experiences, including the Australian Book Awards, the Tribeca Film Festival and the Biennale of Sydney.

Google has also collaborated with creators of live performances to help them explore and implement ways to enable digital versions of existing and new productions, as part of its 'The Show Must Go On' initiative.

To provide tangible financial support to the artists who have lost their income Google donated over $300,000 to the Support Act and the APRA AMCOS Sustainability Fund. They also facilitated a fundraising concert by Powderfinger, exclusively livestreamed on YouTube, which raised nearly half a million dollars in donations to the Support Act.

Many Rivers

Many Rivers helps people to start and grow their own small business. With a specific focus to support female-run and Indigenous businesses, the key objective for Many Rivers is to support people to become financially independent. But the economic shock brought about by the COVD-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on small businesses and the people that relied on the income that they generated.

Many Rivers received a $350,000 grant from Google.org to develop resources, distribute the necessary equipment and provide tailored supports to businesses impacted by the crisis. The funding helped fast track the digitisation of Many River's practical business support to small business owners, and supported 2,900 entrepreneurs through its helpline and 92 entrepreneurs through the 1:1 mentoring program.

"I feel very positive and excited about the future of my business because there are so many different paths now. I'm now able to employ another employee straight after COVID-19. We're looking to grow further, and I'll be hiring more people during 2021."

Morgan Schaafsma, Owner of Open Hands Creative

Djunngaal Elders. Image courtesy of Many Rivers.

Community Impact #3

Back innovative ideas and cutting-edge technologies

Technological innovation is occurring at an unprecedented speed, enabling faster change and progress. AI is increasingly important across all sectors and industries, helping organisations to do extraordinary things as well as the ordinary things more efficiently and effectively. Innovative thinking and approaches will be vital in developing and scaling solutions for the digital future. Access to Google's technology and capabilities can help accelerate innovation and enable organisations to demonstrate and test new ideas.

The following examples illustrate how Google has been working with the arts, culture and media sectors to help them evolve their business models in response to changing consumer habits and expectations.

Bringing the world's art and culture online
Helping experience art and culture in new ways

Art and culture have positive impact on our lives and Art and culture have positive impact on our lives and impact our happiness, wellbeing and mental health.[7] This is why, it is critically important that arts and culture are accessible to everyone.

During 2020, when many of us were stuck at home due to lockdown and travel restrictions, the only way to engage with arts and culture was through digital channels. During the year, Google continued to partner with cultural institutions and artists around Australia to help digitise and manage their collections online, as well as to develop engaging digital experiences for their audiences. One of the major initiatives during 2020, was working with the 22nd Sydney Biennale to deliver their first digital biennale experience.

CASE STUDY
Biennale

The Biennale of Sydney is one of the leading international contemporary arts events. Established in 1973 it has exhibited more than 1,900 national and international artists from more than 100 countries. The 22nd Biennale of Sydney, launched in 2020, called NIRIN presented contemporary art from around the globe in an artist and First Nations-led exhibition. A week into its 22nd season, Sydney went into a lockdown, forcing the exhibition to close its doors.

The Biennale team turned to Google for advice and support to turn the exhibition into an online digital experience. Google Arts & Culture provided funding and invaluable advice to create a 360-degree film of the entire exhibition within days of the lockdown being announced. Given the funding model of the Biennale, they would not have been able to do this so expeditiously without Google's support.

Almost five million people engaged with the Biennale content online in 2020. With the focus of the 2020 Biennale on urgent political concerns, the exhibition contained important pieces from First Nations artists which highlighted issues such as the Black Lives Matter movement. The reach of this content was significantly boosted because of the online engagement, which has played an important role in amplifying First Nations voices not only in Australia, but also internationally, and contributing to change on these issues.

"The Biennale of Sydney takes more than two years to produce with a team of dedicated people. Closing the exhibitions and cancelling or postponing a program of more than 600 events was devastating. But with the enormous support of the Google Arts & Culture team, we have delivered a virtual exhibition that is respectful of artists' works and conveys the true vision of NIRIN—inspiring conversation and action through a meaningful arts experience."

Jodie Polutele, Head of Communications and Community Engagement at the Biennale of Sydney

Adrift Lab (DETACHED) - Lucienne Rickard (Australia)

Seen here is the artwork *Extinction Studies* by Lucienne Rickard, as part of Adrift Lab. Read more about her work and practice, or research and draw your own extinct animal in the NIRIN at Home activity.

Biennale of Sydney 2020.

Digital transformation of news organisations

Building financial sustainability through innovation

The Google News Initiative works with the news and media industry to help journalism thrive in the digital age. Google has been focused on supporting small to medium sized news organisations with cutting edge tools to help them better understand and connect with their users, improve their products and power their technological infrastructure.

In 2020, over 250 news organisations and media publishers received support through various initiatives funded by Google. Initiatives such as the News Lab, News Foundry and Data Labs worked with organisations to improve their use of data and grow advertising and subscriber revenues. Further, through the Google News Initiative Innovation Challenge, seven Australian media outlets (Crikey, the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, Women's Agenda, Guardian Australia, Mamamia, The Conversation, and Australian Community Media) received funds to help bring to market or scale their innovative business ideas.

Quality journalism

Enabling diverse sources of impactful journalism

Quality news content from diverse media sources is critical for our society. To this end, Google invests in the development of new skills and capabilities that enable newsrooms to create high quality journalism.

In 2020 this included providing funding to the Walkley Foundation to deliver digital skills training to journalists all over the country, reaching over 4,000 people across 200 newsrooms. It also involved a partnership with Media Diversity Australia to produce a landmark report on diversity in Australia's broadcasting news and provide five scholarships to culturally and linguistically diverse student journalists to undertake internships in Australian media outlets.

CASE STUDY
Project Kookaburra

The expansion of the internet and changing consumer habits over the past two decades have put traditional media business models under pressure, which is significantly impacting regional publishers. As a result, we have seen as many as 100 regional newspapers in Australia being forced to close over the last seven years. To help regional publishers to shift away from print and effectively engage with their audiences online, Google provided $150,000 to five small regional publishers through Project Kookaburra. The project works with media organisations that are seeking to expand into digital developing new bespoke business models, but which need support to make that transition. This support has a tangible impact on the participating organisations with many reporting that it helped them to better understand their audiences, articulate their own strengths and chart a path towards becoming a digital publisher.

"We would have struggled to get this program up and running without Google's support. Google has leaned into the issues, they are keen to help, and they recognise the importance of journalism."

Simon Crerar, Project Manager of Project Kookaburra

Guardian & Tribune Queensland media outlet.

Recognising the growing importance of advanced technologies such as AI in helping find solutions to address the world's biggest challenges, Google also supports research and development into AI, computer science and other related fields, and promotes free access to AI tools, research and relevant data sets. The following examples highlight some of the key initiatives funded by Google in these fields in 2020.

AI for Social Good
Helping others to innovate with AI technology

Google believes that AI has enormous potential in helping solve complex, real world problems. It will require a concerted, collaborative effort across all sectors of society to realise the potential of AI in addressing serious challenges. Google aspires to make a meaningful contribution to this effort through its AI for Social Good initiative. The initiative is drawing on the scale of Google's products and services, investment in AI research, and its commitment to using and developing AI responsibly.

As part of this effort in Australia, Google is making tools and resources freely available so that anyone can use AI technology to solve problems. For example, TensorFlow is an end-to end open-source platform for machine learning. The platform lets researchers and developers easily experiment, build and deploy Machine Learning powered applications.

Google also provides support to not-for-profits who have innovative ideas for how AI can be used to help address societal problems. Through the Google.org AI Impact Challenge and other grants, Google awarded $3.47 million in 2020 towards the development of ideas that utilise AI technology.

Research
Engaging with academia and investing in the next generation of researchers

Research can be a critical first step to develop new product or businesses, to address unanswered questions and solve entrenched problems. Google's overarching philosophy is grounded in the belief that sharing knowledge accelerates progress for everyone. A key element of this is the publication of scientific research, releasing open-source code and new data sets. Google also supports and participates in the academic research community, which includes providing funding for research and support to the next generation of researchers through fellowships, scholarships, internships and other student opportunities.

Australian researchers have been recognised through a range of awards made available through Google in 2020. Six early-career Australian professors were amongst the 77 individuals selected to take part in the Research Scholar Program, which helps to connect and facilitate long-term relationships amongst scientists around the world. A professor from UTS was an inaugural recipient of the TensorFlow Faculty Award to develop educational content with TensorFlow 2.0, Google's open-source machine learning platform. And six PhD candidates were selected for the PhD Fellowship Program, recognising their exceptional and innovative research in areas relevant to computer science and related fields.

CASE STUDY

Eastern Health and Turning Point – Deveining a national suicide monitoring system powered by AI

Turning Point, Australia's leading treatment and research centre, along with its partners Monash University and the Eastern Health Foundation, were awarded $1.2 million as part of the Google AI Impact Challenge to fund a three-year project to develop a national suicide monitoring system. This system has the potential to set international standards to inform suicide prevention efforts.

The project will use AI methodologies to streamline coding and analysis of national ambulance suicide-related attendance data recorded by paramedics. This rich data will provide information on the context and pattern of self-harm, as well as related mental health and alcohol and drug harms. The value of this information hasn't been harnessed before. This data can then be used to inform public health prevention, policy and intervention, as well as to identify emerging trends, hidden populations and geographical hotspots for targeted responses relating to suicide.

"The coaching and support we've received through the Google AI Impact Challenge has been invaluable and amplified our project's overall impact. The interactive sessions we've had with members of Google's Emerging Tech Design team have allowed us to work with international leaders across the fields of people-centred AI. Through our shared values, we're committed to using AI for social good."

Professor Buntin, AI project lead, Monash University

Community Impact #4

Elevate authoritative information

Forty-eight per cent of Australians rely on online news or social media as their main source of news, but 64% of Australians remain concerned about what is real or fake on the internet.[8] The spread of misinformation erodes public trust in news, government, and civic processes, such as elections, which can have significant consequences for democracy.

Google helps elevate authoritative information to ensure that people have confidence in, and access to, reliable information. The following are select examples that illustrate Google's actions which help surface authoritative information and combat misinformation to protect Australians in 2020:

COVID-19 pandemic
Elevating authoritative information on the COVID-19 pandemic from trustworthy government sources

As the impact of COVID-19 started to ripple around the globe, Google worked with government authorities to surface authoritative information on the pandemic as the situation continued evolving throughout 2020. Location services and over $60 million in free Google Ads have been utilised across Google Search, Maps and YouTube to surface SOS Alerts and provide authoritative information from health departments around the country about the latest COVID-19 restrictions, and direct people to trustworthy resources.

Misinformation
Targeting the spread of misinformation

With the rise of digitisation and the expansion of the internet, misinformation is becoming an increasingly difficult issue for society to address. The internet and social media have made it easy for anyone to share content online, regardless of the accuracy or truthfulness of that information. In response to this growing issue, Google has funded a range of initiatives that support COVID-19 fact-checking and facilitate access to scientific expertise to help media effectively report on and respond to COVID-19 and the vaccine-related information needs of their audiences.

2019-2020 bushfire season
Partnering with state governments to help protect lives and property from the impact of the 2019-2020 bushfires

When the bushfires raged across Australia between November 2019 and January 2020, Google searches for bushfire terms rose by 500% due to people across the country looking for authoritative information on the unfolding disaster. Google responded quickly by helping fire and emergency services to communicate their warning messages and bushfire advice to Australians in affected areas fast, accurately and at scale. This included creating SOS Alerts on Google Search and Maps, and using localised notifications to provide advance warning to people in fire impacted communities.

CASE STUDY
Infoxchange Ask Izzy

Ask Izzy – an initiative of Infoxchange – is Australia's largest up-to-date directory of health and welfare services, connecting people in need with vital support. The service was launched in 2015 using funds received as a result of winning the Google.org Impact Challenge. Today the service supports millions of searches per annum to help people find a hot meal, access family violence support services, financial counselling or find somewhere safe to sleep for the night.

In 2020, Google supported Infoxchange with a $278,000 grant to expand its service directory to support people

experiencing vulnerability because of bushfires and COVID-19. During the first two weeks of the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, searches on Ask Izzy increased to their highest levels in its five-year history, with record levels of searches for emergency relief and Centrelink services, and as the pandemic continued, searches for mental health and family violence services.

"Google is an outstanding partner - they see our success as their success. They were a critical first mover in the development of Ask Izzy. They took a real chance on us."

**David Spriggs,
CEO of Infoxchange**

Community Impact #5

Support causes important to Australians

In an unprecedented year like 2020, not-for-profits have come under pressure to respond to urgent human, environmental and social challenges. With 67% of charities reporting a significant decrease in fundraising, and a drop in volunteer activities during 2020, financial support has been desperately needed.[9]

Every year Google provides funds and resources to over 350 not-for-profit organisations that are addressing some of Australia's most pressing challenges. In 2020, Google Australia contributed over $6.5 million to support a range of causes including mental health, environmental protection and homelessness. In addition to the financial contributions, Googlers also contributed more than 2,500 hours through skilled volunteering, helping many organisations get access to the skills and capabilities they needed to strengthen their impact and help them grow. The projects that Googlers were involved in ranged from supporting organisations to address their technology challenges, improving online visibility, growing online sales or fundraising and transitioning operations online.

CASE STUDY
National Institute of Dramatic Art

Google has established a YouTube Scholarship committing $135,000 worth of funds for three creative individuals to study at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA). The aim of the scholarship is to help bring more diverse participants into the arts world by supporting students from backgrounds that have historically been underrepresented on screen and stage.

By making NIDA more accessible and increasing the diversity of its students, NIDA hopes that underrepresented groups will start seeing themselves represented in Australian stories.

"Given the size of the YouTube scholarship, it makes studying at NIDA possible for people that otherwise wouldn't see NIDA as a viable option."

Liz Hughes, CEO of NIDA

NIDA students stage and screen showcase.

Pillar 1: Equip more Australians with digital skills

Google collaborates with partners on initiatives that aim to enhance the digital skills of Australians. This includes directly supporting teachers, providing opportunities to students, and enhancing digital literacy of small business owners, job seekers and parents.

Invest into the digital skills pipeline

Technology is impacting every sector of the economy, causing a shift in the skills required to be successful in the workforce. It is estimated that by 2030, Australian workers will spend 77% more time using science and mathematics skills. Schools play a critical role in ensuring that young people develop a toolkit of computational skills, such as problem-solving, coding and a good understanding of STEM subjects. To prepare students for future careers, Google provides resources, financial support and facilitates events to build the capacity of educators, and increase awareness and understanding of opportunities in digital technology for students.

"[In Australia], Online teaching is patchy, delayed and inconsistent. It seems to me teachers and schools are reluctant to make this transition in a productive way. Teachers are unlikely to have formal training in digital teaching and they're unlikely to get professional development in it."

Research fellow, education program at the Centre for Independent Studies, Glenn Fahey

Highlights

Education for our educators in computer science
$350,000 worth of Educator PD Grants awarded in 2020 to **23 organisations** which delivered training to more than **5,500** teachers to enhance their ability to teach computer science (CS)

Supporting upskilling of educators in digital technologies
30,000 teachers supported in the last five years through free CSER Digital Technologies Massively Open Online Courses run by University of Adelaide and funded by Google

Promoting STEM careers
Google Australia team conducted **15 virtual school visits** to promote careers in STEM reaching **398 secondary school students** (36% of schools were low SES and/or remote/rural school)

Engaging girls with STEM
98.8% of participants (of almost 900 girls from over 300 schools) of the *Girl's Day Out in STEM* event said that STEM was for them – a 36% increase from before the event

Encouraging STEM careers
Over 2,250 students supported to participate in FIRST Robotics Australia programs since 2016

Increase the public visibility of women in STEM
90 women trained as part of the Superstars of STEM program over the last three years

Investing in professional development and resources for teachers

Technology is seen as a tool that can be harnessed to improve education. However, despite having access to online resources for online learning, integration of digital devices and digital teaching into classrooms is patchy.[11] In addition to building teacher's digital skills, there is also a need to build their capacity to implement the digital technologies (DT) curriculum.[12]

Ongoing professional development (PD) is key to ensuring educators have the skills and confidence to introduce computer science (CS) concepts into classrooms. Google's **Educator PD Grants** are awarded annually to organisations looking to upskill educators to teach computer science or computer science related curriculum. Funding (up to $15,000 for each proposal) is awarded to PD programs that demonstrate a sound pedagogical approach to CS and offer a support community that fosters innovation and shared learning. The programs must also be directly mapped to DT curriculum, and address inclusion and access for hard-to-reach groups (e.g., teachers in remote areas).

In 2020, 23 organisations in Australia were awarded Educator PD Grants totalling $350,000 and estimated to have reached more than 5,500 teachers. The awarded programs focused on access and inclusion, aligning with Google's global diversity commitment.[13]

Research based on a survey of over 900 grantees of Google's Educator PD Grants in the USA and Canada indicates that the PD courses funded by Google have led to a material increase in educator confidence and competence to teach CS.[14] These grants have also been shown to be effective in addressing the equity gap by helping improve access to quality CS education to underserved communities.[15] Feedback from local recipients of the PD grants in Australia has also been positive.[16]

"I got a much better understanding of how these cute little devices can be used in the classroom and just how relevant they are to create a learning environment that challenges and involves children."

Teacher, Goodna State School

"[As a result of the funding from the Educator PD Grants], we can now ensure that our school and other local schools will have some resources and the knowledge to implement digital technologies curriculum."

Principal, Goodna State School

"Funds were an invaluable contribution so we could continue to provide opportunities for remote area K-12 teachers to attend upskilling professional development in computer science, which they would normally not get the chance to attend."

Principal, Mountain Creek State High School

In addition, for the last five years Google has funded CSER, University of Adelaide, to create the **CSER Digital Technologies Massively Open Online Courses** (MOOCs) which are free online courses, designed to support Australian teachers implementing the Australian curriculum: digital technologies. Over the five-year partnership, over 30,000 teachers across Australia have been reached through access to the free online courses. In 2020, Google paid CSIRO and OZCyber to develop an additional MOOC course on the topic of 'Cybersecurity and Awareness'.

It is estimated that together through the Google Educator PD grants and CSER Digital Technologies MOOCs over 800,000 hours of education training was delivered in 2020.

Google is also focused on building long-term partnerships to provide high quality CS teaching resources to primary and secondary school educators that make it easier to implement the DT curriculum in their classrooms. **The Exploring Computational Thinking**, a free online resource to support CT teaching and **CS Unplugged**, a program that helps teach CS concepts without a computer, were developed to support educators. Google worked closely with the University of Canterbury (New Zealand) to ensure these resources could reach as many educators as possible with the goal of ultimately enhancing student learning outcomes.

CS Unplugged is globally recognised as a great introduction to coding and revolutionary in teaching CS without access to a computer.[17] The CS Unplugged resources were particularly important when schools in Australia moved to distance learning during the COVID-19 lockdown, as not all learners had access to a laptop or smartphone, or a reliable internet connection.

To further support the need for remote learning resources, Google funded the expansion of the program to adapt the classroom version of CS Unplugged to be used at home. The **Unplugged At Home** resources allow parents and caregivers to be involved in their children's learning at home.[18]

Additionally, Google has introduced its own coding program, **CS First**, a free online computer science and coding curriculum for primary and secondary students. The lessons and activities are designed to be engaging and relevant, incorporating concepts from other disciplines such as art, sports, fashion design, social media and animation. The CS First curriculum successfully passed the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Seal of Alignment review for Readiness. Reviewers determined that this resource helps build foundational technology skills needed to support the ISTE Standards for Students.

"All the lesson plans are designed for flexible and adaptive uses in a variety of contexts. The CS First learning environment encourages sharing, peer support and participation in a wider learning community."

ISTE reviewer

CS Unplugged, CS First and Exploring Computational Thinking resources have been recognised by the many Australia state governments as the recommended professional learning and teaching resources for implementing the DT curriculum.[17]

Promoting career pathways and diversity in digital tech roles

Domestic university student enrolments in IT degrees have increased by over 50% since the lows of the late 2000s, with over 36,000 enrolments and almost 6,000 degree completions in 2017. Female representation in the technology workforce has also increased, albeit slightly, to 29% in 2018.[18] Although the trend is positive, more needs to be done to help attract young people to careers in technology.

A lack of understanding of the diverse career opportunities and pathways available is one of the barriers to attracting young people to these careers in technology. In an effort to help demystify careers in technology, Google regularly makes school visits (done virtually since March 2020), invites students to visit their offices, and takes part in many career events, such as the **Jobs of the Future Expo**. In 2020, Google conducted 15 virtual school visits, reaching 398 school students. Of all the schools that had a virtual visit – 36% were with a low SES, remote/rural school i.e. lower case.

There has been some progress in pursuing greater diversity in the STEM workforce, but there is much more that needs to be done.[19] Google also supports a range of activities that aim to attract and support young people from traditionally underrepresented cohorts – such as women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and regional and remote students – to pursue their interest in technology.

To help challenge gender stereotypes and beliefs that careers in technology 'are just for boys,'[20] Google has funded the **Superstars of STEM program** run by Science & Technology Australia. This program aims to address society's gender assumptions about scientists, increase the public visibility of women in STEM and provide role models for young women and girls in STEM. The Superstars of STEM program also goes into schools and showcases exciting possibilities of how technology can transform our lives and inspire young people to consider tech careers.

Ninety women have been trained up as Superstars in the program over the last three years. One of these women, Dr Kudzai Kanhutu, is a regular commentator on ABC's The Drum, making use of the media training she received during the program. As a woman of colour, she is a powerful and articulate role model that shows girls and young women the possibilities of careers in STEM. Another, Dr Kate Cole, is an engineer and mask safety expert. During the first wave of the pandemic, Kate was featured on the front page of The Age and Sydney Morning Herald calling for health Minister, the Honourable Greg Hunt MP to order a review into dangerous, faulty masks being imported. Thanks to her advocacy, hundreds of faulty masks have been banned from being sold in Australia, protecting the lives of frontline healthcare workers and members of the Australian public.[21]

Google's support of **Girl's Day Out in STEM 2020**, run as part of the national World Science Week, has opened up opportunities for girls aged 10-14 years to take part in online learning with industry experts. The full-day event offered 20 masterclasses on subjects ranging from marine simulations to scratch coding to creation of sound visualisations. Almost 900 girls from over 300 schools registered for the event. After the event, 98.8% of participants said that they believed that STEM was for them, compared to only 63% before the event.[22]

"What I loved about today is I got to see some amazing women who inspired me."

Participant feedback, Girl's Day Out in STEM 2020

"Really loved the best 'Ready Set Code' because I learnt how to use Scratch and I programmed really cool stuff!"

Participant feedback, Girl's Day Out in STEM 2020

Helping primary school students engage with technology in a fun and accessible way is also important to create sustained interest and for them to potentially pursue careers in technology fields. Google funds **FIRST Robotics Australia** programs, including the APAC Regional Competition and Robots in the Outback Program. The objective of the funding is to help attract and develop teams that include girls, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and students from remote areas. Since 2016, the funding helped support over 400 teams, made up of 2,250 students. In 2020, one of the beneficiaries of the funding was a school in Narooma, a town in outback NSW. Despite the school being damaged by the bushfires, 30 students stayed committed to developing their robot, which they presented at an event in Wollongong, NSW. A survey of past participants showed that those students that took part in the program are more likely to study STEM at university and over 75% of FIRST alumni are now studying or working in a STEM field – skills that are important for Australia's future workforce.[23]

"We reached tens of thousands of Australian students with an emphasis on inspiring them to do more in STEM. We focused on underrepresented groups in STEM – from girls to rural/remote to Indigenous. Our partnership has literally changed lives of not only students, but also communities."

First Robotics Australia

Clontarf students at University of Sydney campus experience.

To further its commitment to support diversity within the technology field, Google also sponsors the **Victorian Indigenous Engineering Winter School (VIEWS)**, and the Indigenous **Australian Engineering School (IAES)** in Perth. These programs help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students explore computer science and technology careers and pathways.

Nineteen high school students joined the IAES in 2020 in Perth, and 10 alumni participated in the Extension Program, which welcomes back highly engaged students for academic mentoring and personal development. VIEWS was postponed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Victoria. However, the program has been successfully running since 2002 and has provided over 1,000 Indigenous Australian high school students an opportunity to experience university.

To increase technology employment pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Google also provides funding to **Indigitek** which seeks to create career pathways to technology and related fields through education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Funding is also provided to the **Clontarf Foundation** which works to enhance the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males across Australia, and exposes them to diverse career opportunities available post school (see Clontarf Foundation case study).

"IAES was an enriching experience which furthered my passion for becoming not only a leader in the field of engineering but also a leader to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. After the IAES, I enrolled in the Bachelor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Queensland. The IAES was an amazing experience with a team who continues to support me along my journey of becoming an engineer."

Lucas Schober is a proud Wuthathi, Yadhegana and Kaurareg man from the Northern Territory and IAES Perth 2016 alumni

"My experience at VIEWS has helped me decide what I would like to do in the future. It has furthered my knowledge on types of engineering. The VIEWS team also helped with making the trip an enjoyable one that I would recommend to my friends."

2019 VIEWS program participant

Clontarf students at Warrnambool Community Fence Painting.

Clontarf Foundation

Equipping young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men with tools to achieve their potential

Challenge

The Clontarf Foundation exists to improve the education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem and employment prospects of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, and to equip them to participate more meaningfully in society. Since opening its first Academy for 25 boys in 2000, the Foundation has grown to cater for over 10,000 boys in 141 schools across Western Australia, Northern Territory, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

Role Google played

Google has been a partner of the Clontarf Foundation for over six years, and in 2020 provided $100,000, enabling 50 boys to participate in the program. In addition to the financial support, Google has played an important role in opening the boys' eyes to opportunities available post-school. Google visits the Clontarf Academies, and has hosted quarterly immersion sessions for the Academies at Google's Sydney offices.

"Google is a huge hit with our academy members. Behind footy trips and certainly amongst our partner visits, a trip to the Google office is the most popular activity for many boys in our program."

Russell Aitkin, Partnerships Manager NSWI

Impact

The Clontarf Foundation delivers on its objectives through programs to drive the school attendance, participation and completion rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys. A key measure of success is the number of Clontarf students gaining and retaining employment after Year 12, which empowers them to leave school with the opportunity of achieving financial independence and stability. In 2020:

- The average attendance rate for students participating in the Clontarf program was 78%
- 8,463 students participated in the program in 2020, and 9,798 are enrolled for 2021
- 776 students completed year 12 in 2020, and 816 are enrolled for 2021

At the end of 2020, 78% of year 12 leavers from the Clontarf programs were engaged in employment, further education, or training a year after graduating.[24]

Support digital upskilling

COVID-19 has accelerated digitisation globally, impacting all aspects of our lives. People need to be digitally literate and have the digital skills to effectively participate in society.

Highlights

Delivering digital skills training
Almost 32,000 people (130% increase from 2019) participated in **Growth with Google** digital skills training

Help people learn the digital skills
Over 10,000 people provided digital skills training through **Digital Springboard**, since 2018 (Infoxchange program, funded by Google)

Geospatial capacity building for Indigenous Australians
Over 400 Indigenous people trained in digital mapping by Winyama (funded by Google)

Supporting online safety programs
~ 4,600 students from rural and regional communities participated in strengths-based (cyber)bullying webinars delivered by Project Rockit (funded by Google)

Supporting online safety education to empower parents and children
$1.5 million grant provided to the Alannah and Madeline Foundation towards the development of the **eSmart Media Literacy Lab** – a media literacy education program

Digital skills for small business owners

Research from Deloitte shows that there is a digital skills gap in Australia, with a divide between future opportunities and the digital skills Australians need to realise those future opportunities. It found that Australian small businesses with high digital engagement are 1.5 times more likely to be growing revenue, seven times more likely to be exporting, and eight times more likely to be hiring. Despite this, 90% of small businesses aren't taking the steps needed to realise this potential.[25]

Although digital tools are readily available for small businesses to use, many lack skills to use them effectively and efficiently. Google worked with a range of partners in 2020 to provide opportunities to Australian small businesses to learn how they can use Google's tools to grow their digital presence.

Grow with Google Australia has partnered with local business chambers, entrepreneurial networks, and community organisations to provide free tools and training to anyone looking to upskill. In 2020, almost 32,000 people (130% increase from 2019) engaged with the resources available online or took part in one of the in-person training courses. For example, in February 2020 Google partnered with the **Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras** and **Sydney Gay and Lesbian Business Association** to deliver training to more than 100 entrepreneurs and business owners from the LGBTQIA+ community.[26] In March 2020, Grow with Google team travelled to Illawarra (NSW) to deliver a special training workshop to the more than 300 local businesses[27], and later to Melbourne to deliver a digital skills workshop to 270 female business owners (see Business Chicks case study).

Project RockIt.

Grow with Google workshop in partnership with Business Chicks.

CASE STUDY

Business Chicks

Empowering female entrepreneurs with digital skills to grow their business

Business Chicks is a membership organisation for women, with around half of the community made up of small business owners. Business Chicks creates content to support women and looks to partner with organisations that share the same values as them. In 2020, Google supported Business Chicks as a major partner for their International Women's Day (IWD) events. Business Chicks held a number of IWD events in March 2020, before the COVID-19 lockdown, with over 5,000 attendees for the events across Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.

In addition to sponsoring Business Chicks IWD events, Google ran a Grow with Google Workshop before the IWD event in Melbourne, which was open to premium members of Business Chicks. Approximately 270 women attended the session.

The Grow with Google workshop was a chance for the women to pick up practical skills, and learn new digital tools and strategies to better connect with customers and grow their business. In Australia, 4 out of 5 consumers turn to the search engine before engaging with a business. Therefore, in the digital age, a business website is the new front door, and the first interaction most customers have with a business. The session focused on helping participants to understand how to stand out online, covering everything

from how to set up a Google My Business profile, strategies for attracting positive and managing negative online reviews, and effective ways to utilise Google Ads and Google Analytics to drive new business. The workshop also offered an opportunity for the female business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs to learn from each other, understand the experiences of others and enhance personal networks.

"The Grow with Google session was a game changer for the women that attended. It received extremely positive feedback."

Amanda Davoren, Head of Commercial Partnerships, Business Chicks

"About 70% of my new business is generated from people calling after seeing my ads on Google Search. As a business owner, there's nothing better than being able to track down to the dollar where your marketing budget is going and to see the results it's returning, it enables my business to just keep growing and gives me confidence... invaluable really!"

Leona Watson, Director of Cheeky Food Events (past attendee of Business Chicks x Grow with Google event)

Using the Grow with Google workshop content, Business Chicks has now created online content which its members and the general public can access to further their digital skills.

Demand for online training resources in particular has seen a dramatic spike in 2020 – a 200% increase on the previous year – as many people were trying to navigate their organisations and careers through the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to this demand, Google Australia also launched **Grow with Google OnAir**, a series of livestreamed and on-demand webinars, available for free to anyone in Australia. The training has been specifically designed for small business owners, people adjusting to remote working and learning, jobseekers, teachers and community not-for-profit organisations. A series of seven webinars covered topics like how to connect with customers and manage business remotely, improve job search skills, and connect remotely using tools like Google Meet and Calendar.

Google Australia also continued to support a team of **local Digital Coaches** and a network of more than 7,000 local partner organisations, so that they can teach virtual workshops in their communities.[28] These training sessions and in-person support from the local Digital Coaches have had a tangible and immediate impact on many people and small business, helping them to not just survive but thrive in the face of adversity. For example, Bliss Gifts & Homewares – a small business that received this support – has been able to utilise Google's digital tools and free advertising credits to grow its online presence and employ staff throughout bushfire season and the COVID-19 pandemic.

"My business wouldn't have survived the bushfires and it certainly wouldn't have survived COVID without Google... We have had a 36:1 return on advertising with Google. We couldn't provide the flexible work environment for our staff, or achieve the sales we have, without Google's support. This is a fact."

Melissa Stone, Owner, Bliss Homewares

Digital skills for job seekers and the community more broadly

Digital participation is critical to social and economic inclusion. In fact, computer literacy is set to become a non-negotiable requirement for 90% of roles by 2023, in occupations from carpentry to plumbing and law. Ensuring everyone has the skills to use digital technology is key.[29]

To help people from diverse and marginalised communities to improve their digital skills, Google.org has supported Infoxchange to develop the **Digital Springboard** program. Delivered across Australia through a network of over 150 not-for-profit and community organisations, the program helps improve digital confidence, support transitions to work and career growth through courses that build job readiness skills, as well as more in-depth topics like social media strategy and an introduction to coding. Participants have reported a significant increase in knowledge and confidence to apply the skills – an average 80% increase – because of the training received.[30] To date, over 10,000 Australians have been trained through Digital Springboard. In 2020, the program has also been extended to include a course for bushfire affected communities. A new disaster preparedness course, developed with support from Google.org and the Australian Red Cross, is designed to help communities become comfortable using emergency apps, digital maps and communications in an emergency. The course is now being rolled out across Australia.

"A chef who'd been out of work for some time had created a CV with his job network provider but wasn't getting any job offers, after he completed our Digital Springboard Build a CV course and learned about online tools that could strengthen his CV, he got the first position he applied for."

"Our data shows that participants across the board feel more knowledgeable about the topic and more confident putting their new digital skills into practise after attending a Digital Springboard course."

David Spriggs, CEO, Infoxchange

Google has also provided funding and expertise to **Winyama**, an Indigenous owned and operated consultancy, to take their **Indigenous Mapping Workshop (IMW)** online for the first time ever, to ensure Indigenous organisations all over Australia can get access to the training to enhance their digital skills. IMW Australia On Demand was launched in 2020 which was purpose built for participants of all mapping abilities to access culturally appropriate training without needing to travel. The course, which is free and available on-demand for anyone who has been accepted through the application form, teaches Indigenous-led organisations to use digital and geospatial tools to collect, host, visualise, share and publish maps to support their community objectives. Over 400 Indigenous people have been trained in mapping through this course.

"We got ideas from other Indigenous people from Australia and overseas about how we could do things at Willowra. How we can map dreamings, places, burial sites and birthplaces of Willowra people."

Keziah Ahkit Kitson, Willowra Community IMW 2019 attendee

"Currently we have trained over 400 Indigenous people in mapping, this is as a direct result from Google Earth Outreach team speaking to me to begin the IMW in Australia."

Winyama

Digital skills for parents and children to stay safe online

Parents have always been concerned for digital safety of their families, and with online learning becoming a norm during 2020, these concerns have only heightened. In a recent survey, 58% of parents expressed increased concern about their children's online safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. Main concerns included the safety of children's information, children receiving unwarranted attention from strangers, and children seeing inappropriate content online. Another growing concern is cyberbullying, which more than half of young Aussies (53%) report experiencing.[31] Evidence suggests that cyberbullying is on the rise, with the Australian Office of the eSafety Commissioner seeing a 40% increase in the number of reports of cyberbullying during the beginning months of COVID-19.[32]

Google supports a range of organisations and initiatives that help promote safety and wellbeing of children online, as well as providing a range of tools and resources for parents so they can proactively manage their family's safety online.

During 2020, Google has continued to support the work of the **Australian Research Council Centre for Excellence for the Digital Child**; and funding the work of **Project Rockit, Kids Helpline, Bravehearts** and the **Alannah and Madeline Foundation.**

Building upon Google's sponsorship of Project Rockit is a youth-driven movement against (cyber)bullying. Building on their sponsorship of the program, Google provided funding to produce **Project Rockit TV**, to support student wellbeing and school communities across the country. The grant funded 40 schools, reaching over 4,600 students from rural and regional communities, to access strengths-based (cyber)bullying webinars.

"As a small rural school in a low socioeconomic area heading into the second lockdown in Victoria this would mean our students could access this awesome, student-driven program to see cyber bullying and some of the perspectives to it from other young people. Without this grant, our students are unable to participate in these forums, and can't see the changes happening in youth culture across Australia."

Teacher from Korumburra Secondary College, VIC

"The students of Nightlcliff Middle School, like most kids their age, are engaged with some kind of social media platform. The staff and teachers are struggling to keep up with the ongoing misuse, at times feeling at a loss in how to manage these circumstances. The Project Rockit program would be a great opportunity to support teachers and staff, while engaging students in a 'healthier' use of social media."

Teacher from Nightlcliff Middle School, NT

Online safety is one of the biggest issues faced in child protection, with more than 1 in 4 Australian 11-16-year-olds saying they are in communication with people they first met online, unconnected with their offline social networks.[33] The **Google Safety Centre** provides a range of tools and tips on how to be safe online. This includes Family Link which enables parents to set up their child's first mobile phone and provides options to monitor kids screen time, limit daily access, and remotely lock their child's device.[34] In addition, Google has created a warning alert which comes up when certain terms related to child pornography are searched on Google Search, directing users to **esafety. gov.au**. This warning serves a dual purpose, both directing Australians wanting to report child pornography to the eSafety Commissioner website, and also deterring those users looking for illegal content.

Recognising the importance of helping children and young people navigate the online world, Google Australia have been working with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation (AMF) to help bring to life a range of programs to help children stay safe online. In 2016, Google provided seed funding of $1.4 million to develop **eSmart Digital Licence**, an online safety education program, which has reached over 300,000 Australian students. Google also provided $1.5 million towards the development of the **eSmart Media Literacy Lab**, a media literacy education program which was launched in 2020 (see AMF case study).

eSmart Media Literacy Lab characters.

CASE STUDY

Alannah & Madeline Foundation (AMF) eSmart Media Literacy Lab

Supporting teachers to confidently teach media literacy in Australian secondary schools

Challenge

Currently about half of Gen Z Australians use social media as their main source of news. The way they engage with news and information media is constantly evolving, and there is a growing need to ensure they have the important knowledge and skills to adapt and thrive. The *News and Young Australians in 2020* report found that "Australian teachers believe it is critically important to teach students about news media, but many feel they are constrained by barriers that prevent them from doing this."[35].

Role Google played

Google.org provided a $1.5 million grant to AMF to work with leading experts and educators to develop the eSmart Media Literacy Lab, a first-of-its-kind resource for school students that equips them with the critical thinking skills needed to effectively navigate and thrive in their relationship with media in the digital environment. In addition to funding, Google.org has provided AMF with ongoing in-kind support to nurture the concept of the eSmart Media Literacy Lab.

Launched as a pilot program in 2020, the eSmart Media Literacy Lab is designed to help teachers build essential media literacy knowledge and skills amongst Australia's secondary school students through innovative gamified teaching and learning tools, and professional learning opportunities. The eSmart Media Literacy Lab is being offered as a free resource for teachers until the end of 2021, including the six interactive modules covering a range of media literacy concepts and issues. Each module contains four levels for Years 7 to 10, and allows teachers to flexibly deliver modules simultaneously to students of diverse capabilities. The resource was validated with input from young people and designed to reflect authentic, evolving youth experience with digital media.

The eSmart Media Literacy Lab aligns with the Australian Curriculum and was the first resource designed to complement the Australian Framework for Media Literacy, developed by the Australian Media Literacy Alliance.

Impact

The eSmart Media Literacy Lab was developed to "empower young people to think critically, create responsibly, be effective voices and active citizens online". The Lab was announced in July 2020 by the Federal Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, Google Australia's Samantha Yorke, and the Foundation's then-CEO, Lesley Podesta.

In 2020, there have been over 500 registrations, over 3,000 module sessions have been delivered to students and a series of professional development events for teachers is underway. Registrations for eSmart Media Literacy Lab are predominantly government, Catholic and independent secondary schools. There are also many welcome registrants from library and community services, universities, primary schools, higher education and cultural institutions, adapting the resource's rich learning content and tools for their own settings and audiences.

Students participating in the eSmart Media Literacy Lab will increase their media literacy knowledge and skills across six key areas: what media is, their relationship with media, information disorder – diving deeper than 'fake news', the impact of media technologies' links between media and democracy, and online hate speech. Teachers will build the capacity and confidence to teach media literacy. Confident and explicit teaching of media literacy can lead to stronger digital civic engagement in young people, supporting safer online communities across Australia.

"With the ongoing oversight of a leading Advisory Group of Australian academics and media, journalism, education and youth voice experts, the Alannah & Madeline Foundation adopts an inclusive children's rights-based approach to media literacy education. Our eSmart Media Literacy Lab was designed with young people, for young people. It can be taught across most secondary subject areas – from the sciences to humanities – helping teachers to enhance students' agency in the digital environment and strengthen their critical thinking abilities."

Ariana Kurzeme, Head of Program Design, Innovation and Advocacy, Alannah & Madeline Foundation

Pillar 2: Enable more resilient home-grown businesses and organisations

COVID-19, lockdowns and the closure of borders have had a large and pervasive negative impact on Australia's economic performance in 2020. Overall, GDP plummeted by a record 7% in the June quarter following a small fall of 0.3% in the March quarter, leading Australia to enter its first technical recession since 1991.[36] Despite positive headwinds, recovery is expected to take a long time as the world works towards a new normal. In recognition of the sustained effort required to rebuild, Google responded by extending free access to many of its products, and offering emergency funds and other support to sectors most impacted by the crisis.

Help harness the benefits of digital technologies

Google has provided free access to many of its products, including advertising credits, to support NFP organisations, schools and small businesses to adapt to new ways of working and doing business.

Highlights

Providing NFPs with access to Google's tools
11,000+ Google Workspace for Nonprofits users with access to free cloud-based tools that have been reported as being critical or important (by **64%** of survey respondents) to their organisation during 2020

Supporting NFPs to grow their reach
70% of not-for-profits are able to reach more people that need their help using Google products

Enabling broader reach and accelerating impact'
$60 million in free advertising provided to SMEs, NFPs and the Australian Government generating a minimum of **$325 million** of economic value

Helping not-for-profit organisations to be more effective in delivering on their mission

Adoption of digital/online tools can help organisations to be more productive and operate more effectively. For some, getting access to the right tools can be prohibitively expensive.

The **Google for Nonprofits** program helps reduce barriers to access technology by providing free tools to not-for-profits to help promote their mission, engage new supporters and fundraise online. The implementation of the program is supported by Connecting Up Australia (part of the Infoxchange Group), who help promote, sign-up and provide additional capacity building support to NFPs.

Over 11,000 of Australia's not-for-profits most of whom are small organisations that could otherwise not afford to pay for these tools, have signed up to use **Google Workspace for Nonprofits** (previously **G Suite for Nonprofits**). Out of those 11,000 organisations, 1,820 were new adopters in 2020.

In a recent survey, Google Workspace for Nonprofits users reported that access to these tools helped them to work more effectively as a team and collaborate (72% of respondents), increased productivity and streamlined operations (67%), increased security and privacy of their communications (65%), and improved the digital skills and knowledge of their team (61%).[37]

The impact of these tools was particularly significant during 2020, as many Australian states introduced lockdowns and restricted movement to curb COVID-19. When asked how valuable they had been to them over the last 12 months, 64% of organisations reported that these tools were either critical or important to their organisation.[38]

"Our organisation needed a document management and knowledge sharing platform. Information sharing was ad hoc with no oversight on information security or accuracy. We've been using a few tools offered by Workspace for Nonprofits and have noticed remarkable changes in the way we manage and disseminate information."

Not-for-profit organisation (survey response from Google Workspace for Nonprofits user)

"During COVID-19, it was challenging to get connected with our community and participants. Google products like Google Classroom, Jamboard, Forms, email and other products helped a lot."

Not-for-profit organisation (survey response from Google Workspace for Nonprofits user)

In addition, Non-for-profits are also eligible to receive $10,000 USD per month in advertising credits through the **Google Ad Grants program**. Organisations can use these ad credits to fundraise, raise awareness of their organisation, educate, distribute important resources and attract volunteers.

In 2020, more than $60 million in free advertising was provided to Australia's not-for-profits, SMEs, and the Australian Government to aid in the response and recovery efforts from the effects of the pandemic. These grants resulted in a year-on-year increase of 80% in Ad Grants usage. Together with Search, Ad Grants generated a minimum of $325 million in economic value for NFPs and SMEs.[39] NFPs have also reported that Ad Grants have helped them to reach more people that needed their help (70%), increase awareness of their cause (63%) and expand their donor base (37%).[40]

"More than 200,000 adults and children in Queensland will acquire epilepsy in their lifetime. As an organisation with a small workforce and large state, we struggle to reach out to people impacted by epilepsy. Reaching people who can benefit from our services or who wish to support our vision has become even more important since the challenges of COVID. Google Analytics in particular has been vital in enhancing our understanding of our potential members needs and journeys and Google Ads allows us to reach people with appropriate information and support."

Not-for-profit organisation (survey response from Google Workspace for Nonprofits user)

"We received a 100% increase in website traffic because of utilising Google Ads campaigns each day. We had 5,000 visitors to the website each week in 2019 and now we have 10,000 each week."

Not-for-profit organisation (survey response from Google Workspace for Nonprofits user)

Google for Nonprofits User Impact

(Findings from the survey of Google for Nonprofits users administered by SVA Consulting, Australian users, N=54)

Operational improvements

72% Helped us work more effectively as a team and collaborate

67% Increased productivity and streamlined operations

65% Increased security and privacy with email

Organisational improvements

70% Helped us reach more people that need our help

63% Increased awareness of our cause

37% Helped us expand our donor base

Skills and knowledge aquired

72% Improved skills to effectively use digital tools for communication or service delivery

67% Improved digital skills and digital knowledge of our team

Value of Google products

64% rated Google Products as **important** or **critical** to their organization over the last 12 months

"Support from Google Ad Grants enables us to engage young people and their parents across Australia with our services. In the past 12 months, more than 310,000 people in Australia have accessed ReachOut's services as a result of the Google Ads activity. This support enables us to extend our reach, and provided budget relief to allow us to invest our marketing spend across other channels. Without this support, we would not be able to maintain the same level of activity."

ReachOut Australia

Enabling remote working and learning during the pandemic

As more employees, educators and students work remotely in response to COVID-19, the **Google Meet** video-conferencing software's advanced capabilities (including allowing larger meetings of up to 250 participants per call) was made available free of charge to all users of Google Workspace (formerly G Suite) and Google Workspace for Education (formerly G Suite for Education). This allowed schools and businesses to stay connected and meet virtually face-to-face, even when everyone is not in the same location.[41]

Google also provided additional education and learning support to schools and educators throughout 2020.

With 4 million students out of school in Australia in March at the start of the COVID-19 lockdowns and 97% of Victorian students in lock down until October, families, schools and teachers were under immense pressure to ensure that students continued to learn. A growing number of Australian schools, with the largest share of users in NSW, already use **Google Workspace for Education** online productivity tools that are provided to schools and educators free of charge. For example, **Google Classroom** allows teachers to collaborate with their students, create, distribute, and grade assignments anywhere, anytime. During term 2, almost 20 years of learning were conducted every day on Google Meet by students and teachers in Australia.

A **Virtual Office Hours Program** was launched to help rapidly onboard new schools to Google for Education, and a daily training webinar series was launched to help teachers become familiar with the Google tools quickly, so that they could continue teaching from home. **YouTube Learning Hub** and **Google's Distance Learning** resources were expanded to include information on how to utilise Google's digital tools to facilitate effective distance learning. Google also hosted regular webinars for teachers to support their move to distance learning, and launched **Teach from Home**, now relaunched as Teach from Anywhere with UNESCO, as a central hub for teachers around the world.[42]
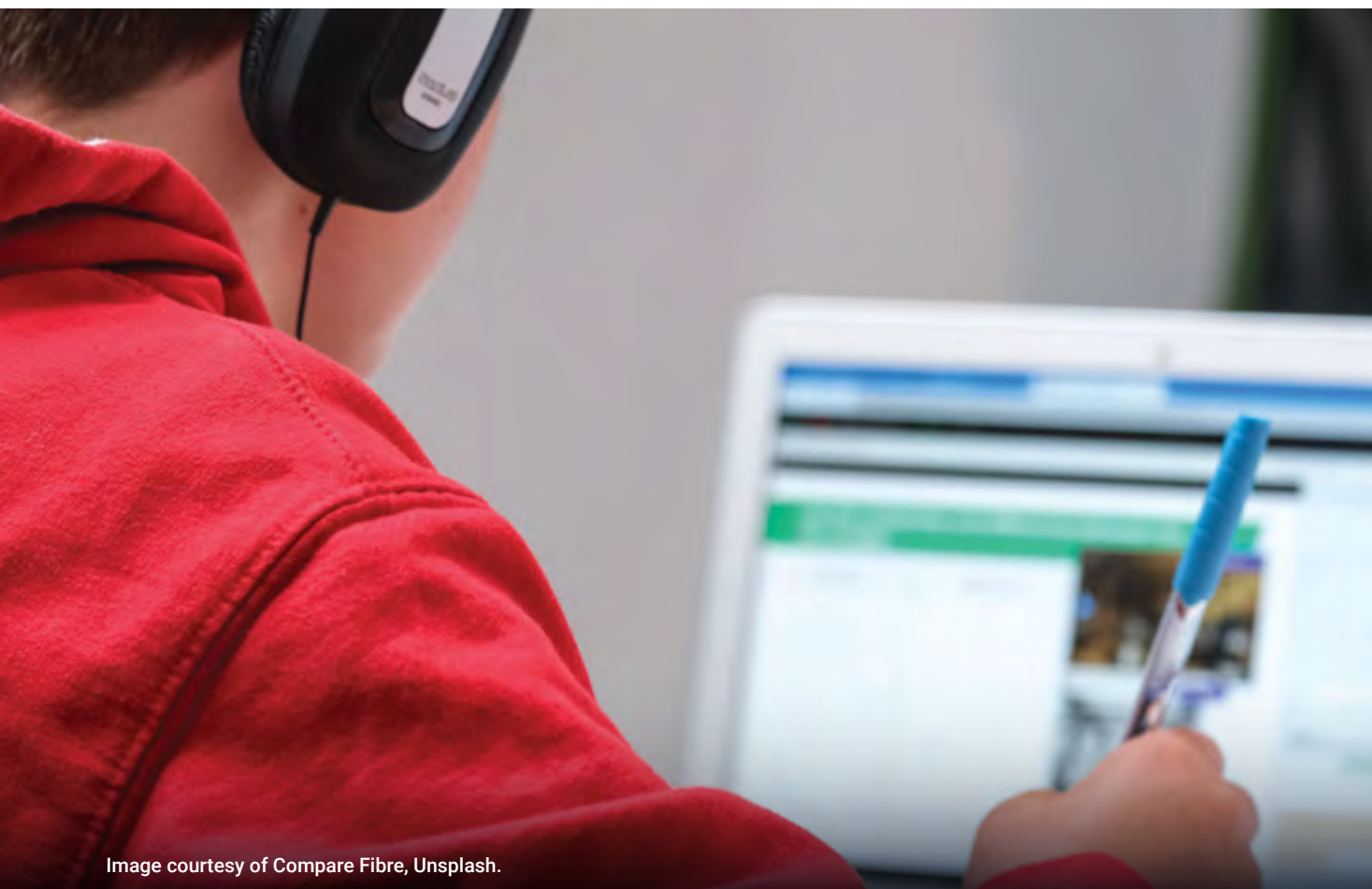

Image courtesy of Compare Fibre, Unsplash.

Contribute to business continuity and economic recovery

COVID-19 had a significant impact on the Australian economy with many sectors and small businesses being forced to close or experiencing significant financial losses. In the early stages of the pandemic, Google responded by offering emergency funds and other supports to sectors most impacted by the crisis.

Highlights

Advertising credits
60 million in free advertising provided to SMEs, NFPs and the Australian Government

Support for SME owners affected by COVID-19
$350,000 grant to Many Rivers to support businesses impacted by COVID-19. 92 business owners (53% female) received funding and in-depth business coaching, and approx. 2,900 supported through the Helpline

Support for news publishers
96 small-to-medium-sized news organisations provided funding through the Journalism Emergency Relief Fund

Support performing arts sector
Commissioned **three theatre productions** to be performed completely online, with 4,000 people tuning in to watch the live shows

Support for artists affected by COVID-19
Over $300,000 donated to Support Act and APRA AMCOS Sustainability Fund supporting artists, songwriters, and composers out of work due to COVID-19

Economic assistance to Australian small businesses and enterprises

Small businesses are the backbone of the Australian economy, creating approximately 7 million jobs and contributing to 57% of the Australian GDP.[43] 2020 was a challenging year for many businesses. As many as two in three Aussie SMEs were impacted by the 2019-2020 bushfires.[44] Then COVID-19 hit. The impact was felt immediately by all businesses, and throughout 2020 business owners had to navigate significant uncertainty, adapting not only to regulations and trading restrictions

but also to changes in consumer demand and preferences. Businesses across all industries and sizes were impacted, however the greatest impact was felt by those operating in the accommodation and food services, arts and recreation services, retail and wholesale trade.[45]

As part of its global commitment to support SMEs, a **Journalism Emergency Relief Fund** was established, supporting 96 small and medium-sized publishers across Australia, and most significantly, Google.org pledged to provide $800+ million to support organisations around the world impacted by the crisis. This included provision of free Google Ads to small businesses (up to $1,450 per organisation), targeted grants and access to finance.[46] In 2020, Google provided approximately $60 million in free advertising to Australian small businesses, not-for-profits and the Australian Government to aid in response and recovery efforts from the effects of the pandemic.

In addition to these grants, Google also launched other bespoke online business tools, such as the **Google for Small Business** website which provides Australian SMEs with resources and tools on how to respond to the challenges faced initially due to bushfires and then COVID-19. Google also introduced new features to Google Search and Google Maps, such as the ability for food delivery and takeout businesses to add dining attributes such as 'curbside pickup', 'no-contact delivery' and 'dine-in' on their profile. This made ordering food much easier for customers, while minimising physical contact so that businesses could continue operating and abide by social distancing measures.[37]

One particular grant awarded by Google.org was to Youth Business International's (YBI) **COVID-19 Rapid Response and Recovery Program**. A US$5 million grant helping YBI support SMEs in 32 different countries across APAC and EMEA, including Many Rivers in Australia (see Many Rivers case study).

"The world is changing dramatically from day-to-day and I feel deeply for business owners everywhere, especially those running smaller businesses and are from under-served communities, who are often least able to bear the economic shocks of this crisis. In the face of these challenges, I have been incredibly inspired by the quick response of our network to support business owners around the world. YBI, with Google.org's new funding commitment, will help us sustain and extend this support throughout 2020, ensuring more than 200,000 businesses can get the advice they need right now to navigate this crisis."

Anita Tiessen, CEO of Youth Business International

A member of Ang-Gnarra Aboriginal Corporation. Image courtesy of Many Rivers.

CASE STUDY
Many Rivers
Helping small business owners to navigate their way through COVID-19

Challenge

Many Rivers was established in 2008 to help Australians overcome individual and structural disadvantage by establishing small businesses, with a special focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Small businesses typically have tight margins and were therefore particularly vulnerable to the economic impacts of COVID-19.

Role Google played

Google.org provided Youth Business International (YBI) with a $7.24 million grant to support 200,000 SMEs across 32 countries through its *Rapid Response and Recovery Program.* In Australia, YBI partnered with Many Rivers who received over $350,000 in funding. Many Rivers used the funding to develop a series of accessible online resources to help people set up small businesses, extend accessibility of its Helpline and provide in-depth mentoring support to entrepreneurs looking to adapt or improve their business models. In addition, Many Rivers have set up a 'technology lending library' allowing Indigenous communities access to laptops, iPads, speakers and other technology.

Impact

Many Rivers sees economic participation as a pathway out of structural disadvantage. This funding has helped to fast track the digitisation of Many River's practical business support to small business owners. Over 2020, Many Rivers business coaches supported 2,900 entrepreneurs through its Helpline on key issues they are facing, and provided in-depth support and ongoing mentoring to 92 entrepreneurs (53% female). Over 950 entrepreneurs were able to sustain or grow their business operation throughout 2020, maintaining 2,121 jobs.

AUSSIE ENTERPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT: Morgan Schaafsma, Owner of Open Hands Creative[47]

After being open for only 11 months, Morgan Schaafsma, owner of Open Hands Creative which inspires others to be creative through art workshops, was forced to close overnight when COVID-19 hit Australia. Through YBI's Rapid Response and Recovery Program, Morgan was introduced to a business coach from Many Rivers. The coach helped her develop a new business offering in the form of a structured, online 30-day art challenge that covered basic skills and more complex drawing exercises while Open Hands Creative was unable to run in-person workshops during COVID-19. Another way which Morgan was able to innovate was to up an online Etsy store selling DIY kits.

"Colin [Many River's business coach] gave me support on creating these online elements of my business. He also helped me by making sure that it is also working for the core of my business. It is really valuable that I can go to him and he will help me step back, re-evaluate and realised things that I have missed."

Morgan Schaafsma, Owner of Open Hands Creative

Morgan was surprised to see that these were immensely popular during lockdown. This new model helped Morgan sustain the income that she would have earned if her business was not affected by COVID-19.

"I feel very positive and excited about the future of my business because there are so many different paths now. I'm now able to employ another employee straight after COVID-19. We're looking to grow further, and I'll be hiring more people during 2021."

Morgan Schaafsma, Owner of Open Hands Creative

Supporting digital transformation of local arts and culture events during COVID-19

Many arts and culture events were forced to cancel their in-person events or close due to COVID-19. In response, Google partnered with the creative community to help find innovative ways to digitise content, bring festivals, events and performances online for Australians to enjoy, and creators to stay engaged with their audiences and earn income.

Google Arts and Culture (GAC) and YouTube teams have collaborated with many local cultural partners to transition in-person events to digital experiences. With the help of YouTube, Google enabled digital transformation of the **Australian Book Awards** and collaborated with the **Tribeca Film Festival** to bring 20 film festivals from around the world, including the Sydney Film Festival, online. GAC also worked with the **Biennale of Sydney** to deliver the first ever virtual biennale, bringing back to life the exhibitions and **programs of NIRIN** – the 22nd Biennale of Sydney – for local and international audiences to explore (see Biennale of Sydney case study under Pillar #3).

"Great to see another example of innovation and agility in Australia's arts sector – @biennalesydney partnering with Google Arts & Culture to make NIRIN content available online."

Tweet by Paul Fletcher MP, Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

"The Biennale of Sydney takes more than two years to produce with a team of dedicated people. Closing the exhibitions and cancelling or postponing a program of more than 600 events was devastating. But with the enormous support of the Google Arts & Culture team, we have delivered a virtual exhibition that is respectful of artists' works and conveys the true vision of NIRIN – inspiring conversation and action through a meaningful arts experience."

Jodie Polutele, Head of Communications and Community Engagement at the Biennale of Sydney

Google also collaborated with the creator of live performances to help them explore and implement ways to enable digital versions of existing and new productions, as part of its **'The Show Must Go On'** initiative. In just a year, the initiative has accumulated hundreds of clips and full shows, and has attracted 47 million views from audiences around the globe.

Google commissioned **'Theatre, Made for the Internet'** showcasing three Australian performing arts organisations — The Last Great Hunt, Griffin Theatre Company, and Sandpit. Almost 4,000 people tuned in to watch the live shows. Google also partnered with **Belvoir Theatre** to livestream a fundraiser, and separately, **The Australian Ballet**, who digitised their entire season, and **Opera Queensland**, who did a three-month creative sprint to create live performance for a streamed audience.

"Brilliantly crafted through an interplay of quaint cardboard props, low-fi animation and live performances streamed from five Australian suburbs, this new piece by Perth's The Last Great Hunt gifts us the wholesome joy our lonely hearts needed."

Review of Bad Baby Jean by Kate Prendergast from Audrey Journal

"Google's prompting acted as a great inspiration to think creatively and entrepreneurially in response to the extraordinary challenges COVID presented to Opera Queensland. The opportunity to invest in a number of artists, who could work together to explore what might be possible became the foundation for a complete shift in the operations of our organisation, leading to the development of a series of different programs that led to the employment of many more artists beyond the original seven."

Opera Queensland

To support the music industry Google has donated nearly $400,000 to **Support Act** and **APRA AMCOS Sustainability Fund** supporting songwriters, and composers who were impacted by the loss of work due to COVID-19' TO: 'To support the music industry Google has donated over $300,000 to Support Act and APRA AMCOS Sustainability Fund supporting artists, songwriters, and composers who were impacted by the loss of work due to **COVID-19. In** total, 325 songwriters and composers from across Australia and New Zealand have received financial support from the APRA Sustainability Fund. After a decade-long hiatus, beloved Australian band Powderfinger regrouped for 'One Night Lonely' which exclusively livestreamed on YouTube. The event attracted over half million views resulting in nearly $500,000 in donations to the Support Act and Beyond Blue.

Google also developed a range of free toolkits to help creators to move their events and experiences online, including a **'Performing Live, Online'** guide, **'Live Stream Playbook'**, **'Digital Events Playbook'** and **'Connected to Culture Toolkit'**. These free resources aim to empower artists and cultural organisations to plan, promote and stream content for direct engagement with their audiences. These toolkits also showed arts organisations and creators how to add donation links to their business profile on Google, letting people know how to help them with their rebuilding efforts. In addition, Google also hosted training for organisations like the **Australia Council** and **Create NSW**, building their capacity to create 'made for digital' work.[48]

Pillar 3: Back innovative ideas and cutting-edge research

Advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) can help our society to find new ways to tackle big problems, as well as help people experience and understand the world around them differently. With almost 80% of businesses believing that AI will be important to the business in the short-to-medium-term[49], Google seeks to empower and support organisations to explore the possibilities that technology presents by funding innovative ideas, enabling better use of data and supporting the adoption of new technologies.

Highlights

Supporting regional publishers to develop profitable digital businesses
145 regional publishers participated in **Google News Lab** pilot, an initiative aimed at building digital skills and capacity, and researching and testing of new small-scale digital publishing models

Supporting regional publishers to grow advertising revenue
100 regional publishers supported to create new digital advertising networks in partnership with the Victorian Country Press Association

Investing into capacity of social sector to use AI
$3.5 million invested into projects that use Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to address critical social issues

Enhancing digital skills of journalists
Over 4,000 journalists from more than 200 newsrooms across Australia received digital skills training through **the Walkley Foundation**

Supporting delivery of digital cultural experiences
Supported delivery of the fist-ever virtual Biennale of Sydney – NIRIN, reaching **4.8 million people** through online content

Foster a culture of innovation

Technological innovation is occurring at an unprecedented speed, enabling faster change and progress. Technologies like AI are becoming increasingly more important across all sectors and industries, helping organisations be more efficient, stay competitive and grow their impact. Google supports a range of initiatives to help organisations make better use of data and innovate.

Supporting innovation within newsrooms

Innovation within newsrooms is core to ensuring news organisations can continue to produce quality journalism. Google has been working with a range of partners on programs and tools that focus on helping media organisations to optimise revenue, make better use of data, and increase capacity of journalists to use digital tools for reporting and verification.

In response to the changing media landscape many news organisations are being forced to rethink their business models. To support this transition, Google Australia invested into a **News Lab** pilot program to build digital skills and capacity among regional publishers, and to research and test new small-scale digital publishing models. In 2020, Google supported more than 145 regional publishers through the program, with many participants reporting that the training helped them achieve goals such as increasing their advertising revenues, better understanding their audiences, and expanding their news coverage.[50] One of these initiatives was **Project Kookaburra**, which engaged with five regional publishers to research and pilot new business models (see Project Kookaburra case study). Moreover, through the **News Foundry** initiative, Google helped more than 100 regional publishers create a new digital advertising network in partnership with the Victorian Country Press Association.

FortySouth Tasmania media outlet.

CASE STUDY

Project Kookaburra

Empowering sustainable business growth of Australian regional news publishers

Challenge

The expansion of the internet and changing consumer habits over the past two decades have put traditional media business models under pressure, which is significantly impacting regional publishers. Over the past 5 to 7 years approximately 100 regional newspapers in Australia have closed. In Australia, media ownership is highly concentrated and focused largely on metropolitan centres. But the Australian population is diverse and a third of all Australians live in regional areas, where they are often served by only one local news publisher. Many news outlets continue to rely on traditional business models and often have fewer resources to grow their digital businesses. As audiences seek to find their news online, and revenues gradually shift away from print, newspapers in these communities need the skills and resources to transform themselves into digital publishers.

Role Google played

Google provided funding to five small regional publishers, through Project Kookaburra, that were seeking to expand into digital and develop new bespoke business models. Many of the regional publishers that Project Kookaburra worked with knew that they needed to go digital but were not sure how to make the transition. Project Kookaburra helped them do that.

Impact

Through the project, the publishers reported that they better understood their customers and audiences, were clearer about their strengths, and could think about what it meant to move from a traditional print publisher to a digital publisher. As part of the project, case studies were developed, which will be shared with other regional publishers to learn from their experiences. Webinars were also run over a week in December 2020 to further share what was learnt in the project.

"We would have struggled to get this program up and running without Google's support. Google has leaned into the issues, they are keen to help, they recognise the importance of journalism."

Simon Crerar, Project Manager of Project Kookaburra

As part of the first **APAC Google News Initiative Innovation Challenge**, seven Australian media outlets (Crikey, the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, Women's Agenda, Guardian Australia, Mamamia, The Conversation, and Australian Community Media) were recognised for the projects that aim to inject new ideas into the news industry. The Challenge attracted 215 applications from eighteen countries with entries ranging from news start-ups in Indonesia, to web publishers in Mongolia and Nepal, to video and audio broadcasters in Australia. A total of 23 organisations were selected in 14 countries – amounting to a total support worth $4.63 million.[51]

Google is also working with news publishers to help them make the most of their data. **Google News Initiative Data Labs** was set up to help participating news publishers to grow through the improved use of data. The five-month program helped participating news organisations to fully optimise data available to them, but also explore new ways to advance their data maturity. Participants experienced significant outcomes such as a 40% increase in frequent readers ('brand lovers'), a 20% lift in yield and up to 50% improvement in ad viewability. To ensure the lessons from participating publishers were put to good use, Google published a playbook capturing case studies to drive a data culture in newsrooms.

To help re-imagine the role of data in non-fiction storytelling, the **Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC)** and Google Australia launched **Raw Data, Real Stories**, a bold new $40,000 pitching initiative designed to bring non-fiction storytellers and journalists together with technologists and data visualisation experts to create innovative new work that brings raw data to life. "**The Invisible Crime**", an investigation by The Age that mapped the journey of survivors of sexual violence through the criminal justice system, was one of the ground-breaking stories that resulted from this investment.

"Helping people to tell stories through data lies at the heart of Google's mission to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."

Nic Hopkins, Google News Lab Lead for Australia and New Zealand

"As we move ever further into the digital era, AIDC is excited to partner with the Google News Initiative to encourage the pursuit of co-creation and media innovation between journalists, documentarians and technologists."

Alice Burgin, ex-CEO of AIDC

To embed continuous innovation within newsrooms, Google established a Newsroom Leadership Program, in partnership with the Columbia School of Journalism (USA), to develop the business and product expertise of emerging newsroom leaders from the Asia Pacific region. Two Australian editors, Danielle Cronin from the Brisbane Times and Betina Hughes from Australian Community Media, were chosen among 12 Fellows for the program.[52]

Diversity is critical for creating a thriving and representative media, filling gaps for stories that don't feature in the mainstream and providing a positive and authentic representation of different communities. Google worked to support initiatives that champion diversity, equity and inclusion in journalism through a combination of efforts, including pipeline development, talent support and research. Since 2019, Google has collaborated on a range of projects with **Media Diversity Australia** (see MDA case study) and funded **the Walkley Foundation** to facilitate the rollout of free digital skills training to journalists. The latter focused on equipping participants with the knowledge and skills to effectively use digital tools and technology to produce good quality reporting and tackle misinformation. In 2020, over 4,000 people from more than 200 newsrooms across Australia have taken part in the Walkley Foundation training.

Who Gets To Tell Australian Stories?

Putting the spotlight on cultural and linguistic diversity in television news and current affairs

Media Diversity Australia

CASE STUDY
Media Diversity Australia (MDA)
Championing diversity in Australian newsrooms

Media Diversity Australia (MDA) is a national not-for-profit organisation, led by journalists and media professionals, with a vision that Australian media is as culturally and linguistically diverse as Australia. Established in 2017, MDA plays a unique role as a champion for cultural diversity in Australian journalism and news media.

In 2019, MDA partnered with Google Australia, the Journalism Union MEAA and four Australian universities to produce the landmark report on diversity in Australia's broadcasting news. "Who Gets to Tell Australian Stories?" analysed 81 news programs over two weeks in June 2019, equal to about 19,000 news items. The report found that almost 76% of those on Australian screens were of Anglo-Celtic background, while 6% were from Indigenous or Non-European backgrounds.[53]

Subsequently, Google provided $40,000 to MDA to fund scholarships to five culturally and linguistically diverse journalist students, allowing them to undertake an eight-week internship at an Australian media outlet. In 2020, the five interns were placed at the Courier Mail, Channel Ten, ABC, Channel Nine and the Australian division of the New York Times. The program was a success, providing all interns with a pathway into mainstream media outlets.

In addition to this support, Google provided funding to MDA to help them develop their strategic plan in 2020, which allowed MDA to raise additional support from other funders to further pursue their vision.

"Google has been incredibly supportive of MDA's mission and has invested in making our organisation sustainable in the long-term. Our partnership continues to be strong as we work towards creating a news media more reflective of our increasingly diverse population."

Antoinette Lattouf, Director & Co-Founder of Media Diversity Australia

Help reinvent traditional experiences with technology

Technology has also provided an opportunity to help local and global audiences to better understand and appreciate Australia's beauty, rich cultural heritage and history. Working with local cultural institutions and artists, **Google Arts & Culture (GAC)** helps preserve and bring arts and culture online. There are currently over 120 cultural institutions across Australia that have signed up to the GAC platform, allowing audiences from around the world to engage with its art, objects and stories online, including collections from the National Gallery of Victoria, National Portrait Gallery and the National Archives of Australia. Most recently GAC helped digitise and publicly launch online collections for the 22nd Biennale of Sydney NIRIN (see Biennale of Sydney case study), Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Islamic Museum of Australia, Sydney Harbour Trust, and the Museum of Freedom and Tolerance.

"It is exciting to partner with Google Arts & Culture to bring the Islamic Museum of Australia to a wider audience. Google is a leader in digital technologies, that they have developed a platform for arts and cultural institutions like ours to reach a global audience is just brilliant. The museum is excited to have this opportunity to share our collections with a global audience."

**Moustafa Fahour, Founder & Director of the Islamic Museum of Australia**

"Telling the stories of a diverse group of Western Australians ensures our community understands the world from a different perspective. Ensuring the Museum of Freedom and Tolerance's collection is accessible to everyone is an innovative and excellent way of sharing their goal of promoting a society where everyone can live peacefully, free from racism, prejudice and fear."

Patrick Gorman MP, Federal Member for Perth

"The partnership with Google Arts & Culture offers immersive access into never-before-seen aspects of Harbour Trust sites and can be seen by people around the world."

Kathryn Roberts, Director of Marketing and Visitor Experience of Harbour Trust

The **Google Street View** on **Google Maps** also helps make cultural and natural attractions, such as Indigenous rock carvings and other sites of significance accessible for viewing by global audiences. For example, captured in partnership with the Traditional Owners, Tourism Northern Territory and Parks Australia, people can explore extraordinary archaeological sites of the Kakadu National park whose geological history spans more than two billion years. Viewers can journey through towering sandstone pillars at Bardedjilidji, take a look at rock art galleries which includes a painting of a thylacine (the Tasmanian Tiger) depicted before they became extinct on the mainland around 2,000 years ago, or dive into Kakadu's big waterfalls – Twin Falls and Jim Jim Falls.[54] Other virtual experiences include the Mt Kosciuszko Trail, the Great Barrier Reef, the Uluru-Kata Tjuta, and many others.

Google Arts & Culture
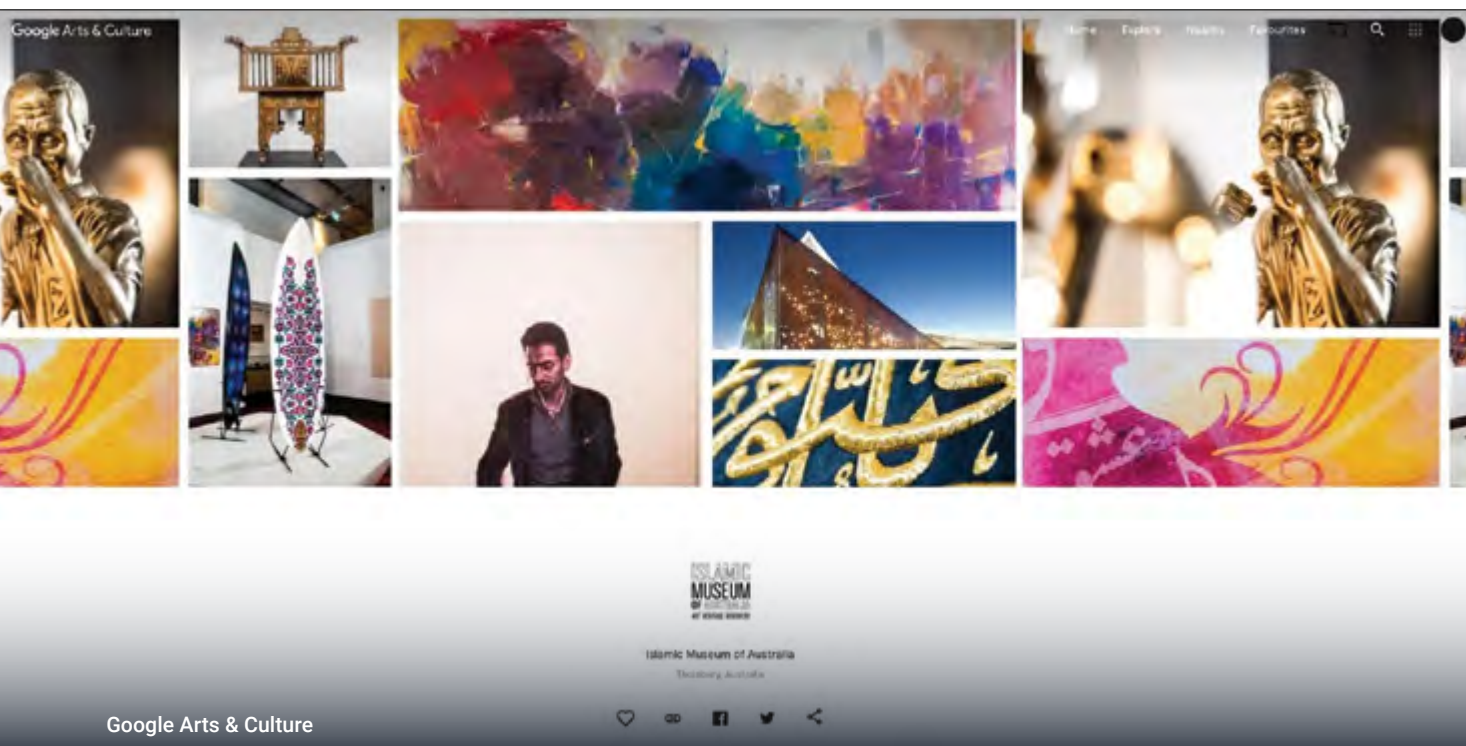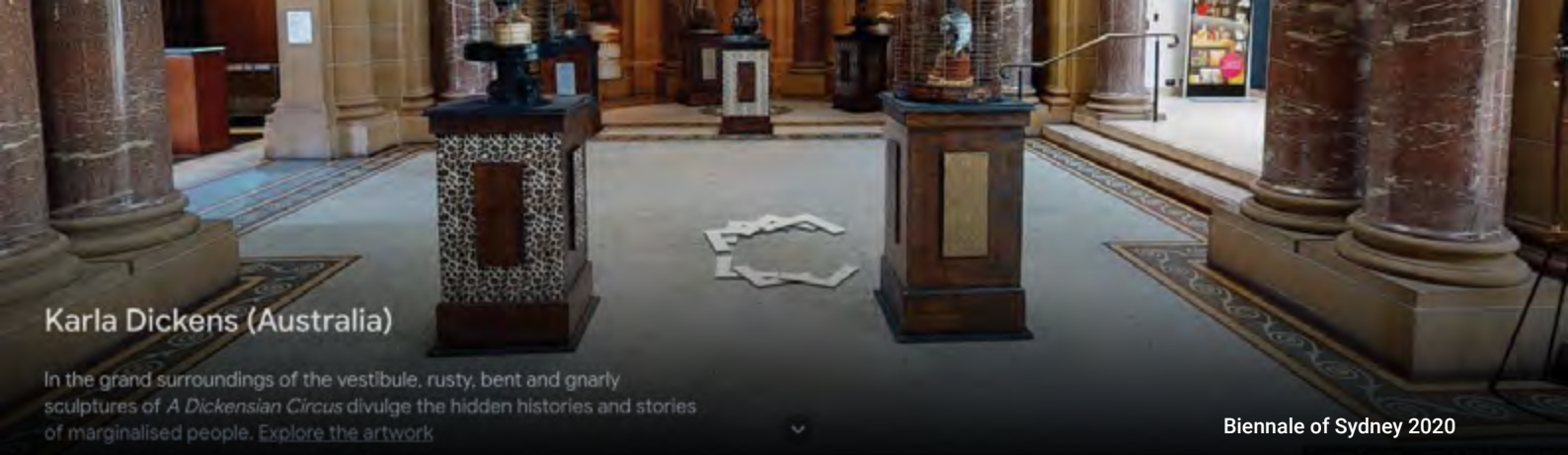
Karla Dickens (Australia)

In the grand surroundings of the vestibule, rusty, bent and gnarly sculptures of *A Dickensian Circus* divulge the hidden histories and stories of marginalised people. Explore the artwork

CASE STUDY

Biennale of Sydney

Enabling the first ever digital biennale experience for the 22nd Biennale of Sydney NIRIN

Challenge

The Biennale of Sydney is one of the leading international contemporary arts events; established in 1973 it has exhibited more than 1,900 national and international artists from more than 100 countries. The 22nd Biennale of Sydney, launched in 2020, called NIRIN presented contemporary art from around the globe in an artist and First Nations-led exhibition. NIRIN (meaning 'edge') is a Wiradjuri word. First Nations languages were used throughout the Biennale to highlight the urgency of receiving and sustaining the future of language diversity.

In 2020, a week after the 22nd Biennale of Sydney opened to the public, the COVID-19 pandemic hit Australia and it was announced that Sydney, along with the rest of Australia, would be going into lockdown. This meant that the Biennale would have to shut its doors, with no certainty as to when they could reopen. This left the Biennale team with the need to find another way to share the 22nd edition with the community.

Role Google played

The Biennale has a long-standing relationship with Google over the last 7 years. When Sydney went into lockdown, the Biennale team turned to Google for advice and support to make the Biennale accessible online. The Biennale team didn't just want to 'replicate the exhibition online' but rather create a digital experience. Google Arts & Culture provided advice and supported the Biennale team to do this by funding 360-degree filming of the entire exhibition as soon as the lockdown was announced. Given the funding model of the Biennale, they would not have been able to do this so quickly without Google's support.

Impact

4.8 million people engaged with the Biennale content online in 2020, and interactions with the Biennale on social media platforms quadrupled in 2020, compared to 2019. Digital visitors demonstrated a sustained and deep engagement with Biennale artworks online: while the average time

people engage with art in real life is 17 seconds, users engaged with the Biennale's online tours for an average of 90 seconds. Google's support was key to the Biennale having this reach and engagement.

"There is no way that we would have reached 4.8 million people without Google's tips and tricks. We learned very quickly to not try and become experts in every aspect of the digital world, but to listen and learn from the people who play in this space everyday. Everything moved so quickly; it would have been a minefield to get through on our own."

Barbara Moore, Chief Executive Officer, Biennale of Sydney

When the Biennale was able to reopen its doors in June 2020, 28% of people who came through the doors had never been to the Biennale before. This demonstrates the impact that the online presence had, while also acknowledging the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on people seeking out culture and the arts.

With the focus of the 2020 Biennale on urgent political concerns, the exhibition contained important pieces from First Nations artists which highlighted issues such as the Black Lives Matter movement. The reach of this content was significantly boosted because of the online engagement, which has played an important role in amplifying First Nations voices not only in Australia, but also internationally, and contributing to a ripple of change on these issues.

"Most importantly, NIRIN is a place from which to see the world through different eyes, to embrace our many edges and imagine pride in ecologically harmonious and self-defined futures. It provides an opportunity to explore both ancient ties and new kinships borne of sensitivity, desire and multiplicity."

Brook Andrew, Artistic Director of the 22nd Biennale of Sydney

Working with Google has also created a legacy project from the 2020 Biennale exhibition, "NIRIN: Art From the Edge". 700 artworks are now online on Google Arts & Culture with content and videos for the public to access now and into the future.

These initiatives are important not only because they help people around the world to come a bit closer and learn about the world's oldest living culture and connection to the land, but to also ensure that the valuable natural and cultural assets of our country can be protected and preserved. The latter was the focus of the Google Australia partnership with **Parks and Wildlife Service WA** and the not-for-profit **Underwater Earth** which worked to document the costal trails and underwater life of the Ningaloo Coast. A World Heritage listed site, the **Ningaloo Coast**, is a home to 300 species of coral, 500 fish species and megafauna such as whale sharks. The Street View captures the Ningaloo Coast in its current condition and will allow researchers to track how it is evolving.[55]

"We have been capturing underwater Street View imagery, partnering with Google, for over nine years. We believe in the importance of revealing precious ocean environments to the world to help educate and inspire ocean protection and conservation. Ningaloo Reef is simply too precious to lose."

Christophe Bailhache, Co-founder of not-for-profit Underwater Earth, and underwater photographer for this Ningaloo collection

"What an amazing opportunity to not only let Ningaloo enthral, excite and engage an even broader audience, but importantly help better understand this most beautiful and fragile of underwater wonders in the changing world we live in. Thank you, Google and Underwater Earth."

Dr Peter Barnes, Ningaloo Marine Park Coordinator

Sport is another defining pillar of Australian identity, values and culture. Australians share a collective memory through sport – it is a source of pride and it embodies a shared spirit of inclusivity. To help Aussies better connect with and explore the sports their love, GAC launched a digital exhibition '**Great Sporting Land**', showcasing the people, moments and places which have shaped Australian sport history. The exhibition features over 11,000 archived images and videos, and more than 100 original stories from over 30 partners including the Melbourne Cricket Club, Australian Football League, National Portrait Gallery and Bondi Surf Lifesaving. GAC's Art Camera technology also travelled to sporting institutions across the country to capture over 200 pieces of art, archival materials and artefacts in high-resolution gigapixel quality.[56]

"Congratulations to Google Arts & Culture and all those involved in this landmark digital exhibition. It is a great celebration and showcase of Australia's sporting spirit, brought to life through the transformative benefits of technology and connectivity, for all Australians and the world to enjoy."

Hon Paul Fletcher MP – Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

"I've been exposed to years of 'inner sanctum sport' and its associated stories, characters and places but your exhibition will take that access to a whole new level even for those of us lucky enough to be in it for a living."

Nick Riewoldt, Former St Kilda Saints Captain (AFL)

Support new ideas and use of emerging technologies

The potential of AI to solve complex, real-world problems is large. To help more people tackle challenges with AI, Google open-sourced machine learning tools like **TensorFlow**, to help others innovate with AI technology and collaborate with researchers around the globe. In Australia, Google has provided funds and worked with researchers, developers and business to use AI to solve difficult problems in the fields of health, conservation, linguistics and more.

The **Google AI Impact Challenge**, part of Google's **AI for Social Good** program and run by Google.org, attracts hundreds of applications annually from countries all over the world. It helps put a spotlight on the most innovative ideas that use AI technology to address the most pressing issues in our society. More than 2,600 applications from 119 countries were received for the inaugural award. Amongst the twenty winners of the 2019 Google AI Impact Challenge was a project from Australia's **Eastern Health and Turning Point**. The project will receive $1.2 million, and mentoring from Google AI experts, to develop a national monitoring system which has the potential to set international standards informing suicide prevention efforts. By using AI tools to analyse ambulance clinical records, Eastern Health-Turning Point project aims to uncover critical suicide trends and potential points of intervention to better inform policy and public health responses (see Eastern Health and Turning Point case study).[57]

Eastern Health and Turning Point

CASE STUDY
Eastern Health and Turning Point
Developing a national suicide monitoring system powered by Artificial Intelligence

In Australia, suicide remains the leading cause of death for those aged between 15 and 44 years. In addition to the tragic premature deaths, death by suicide is estimated to cost the Australian economy over $550 million each year.[58] In May 2019, Google announced that Turning Point, Australia's leading treatment and research centre, along with its partners Monash University and the Eastern Health Foundation, would receive $1.2 million (US$850,000) as part of the Google AI Impact Challenge. This will fund a three year project to develop a national suicide monitoring system which has the potential to set international standards to inform suicide prevention efforts. Project leads will also take part in Google's Launchpad Accelerator training program, and have access to Google's AI experts and other resources.[59]

The project will use AI methodologies to streamline coding and analysis of national ambulance suicide-related attendance data recorded by paramedics. This rich data will provide information on the context and pattern of self-

harm, as well as related mental health and alcohol and drug harms. This data can then be used to inform public health prevention, policy and intervention, as well as to identify emerging trends, hidden populations and geographical hotspots for targeted responses relating to suicide.[60]

Currently the most common data used to inform policy around suicide is coronial data, however this can take up to three years to become available and does not capture multiple suicide attempts that also occur across the community. Conversely, as ambulances are often the first point of contact in a crisis, ambulance clinical records provide a unique, reliable, timely and novel avenue for capturing this type of information. The value of this information hasn't been harnessed before.[61]

"The coaching and support we've received through the Google AI Impact Challenge has been invaluable and amplified our project's overall impact. The interactive sessions we've had with members of Google's Emerging Tech Design team have allowed us to work with international leaders across the fields of people-centred AI. Through our shared values, we're committed to using AI for social good."

Professor Buntin, AI project lead, Monash University

Google.org has also made two other grants to organisations applying AI to address pressing social and environmental issues in Australia: The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Sydney University's Westmead Applied Research Centre. Sydney University's Westmead Applied Research Centre will use the $1 million grant to develop a customised digital health program powered by AI, aimed at reducing risk of a heart attack, the biggest cause of death globally. Whilst the $1.27 million Google.org grant to **WWF Australia** will support recovery of animals impacted by bushfires. The project, called An Eye for Recovery, will utilise more than 600 sensor cameras as well as computer vision technology to locate surviving wildlife and determine where recovery actions are needed. The damage caused to wildlife by the fires is still being evaluated, but it is estimated that nearly 3 billion animals died, and 119 threatened species were identified as needing urgent intervention. WWF has installed the first cameras on Kangaroo Island – where fires impacted half of the island – to monitor species like the critically endangered Kangaroo Island dunnart. More than 90% of the dunnart's habitat was scorched in the fires, but there are signs of hope with the new cameras already capturing an image of the mouse-sized marsupial in Flinders Chase National Park.[62]

"These cameras will allow us to put hundreds of pairs of eyes into bushfire landscapes to locate elusive species like the dunnart. This will give us a better understanding of what animals have survived and where we should target our recovery actions."

Darren Grover, WWF-Australia's Head of Healthy Land and Seascapes

"Using Google's AI technology, Wildlife Insights helps biologists automatically identify and share sensor camera images, which reduces time spent manually sorting through images to find that rare dunnart sighting. On average, human experts can label 300 to 1,000 images per hour. With the help of Google AI Platform Predictions, Wildlife Insights can classify the same images up to 3,000 times faster, analysing 3.6 million photos an hour."

Tanya Birch, Program Manager, Google Earth Outreach

Google's other collaborations that support experimentation with advanced technologies include: Woolaroo project with **Yugambeh Museum** to build a solution which will use machine learning (ML) and photo recognition technology to identify items in pictures and translate them into a chosen Indigenous language; Fabricius project with **Macquarie University (Australian Centre for Egyptology)** to build a tool that uses an ML technology to translate ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs; and a project with **Uncanny Valley** which included development of two mobile and web-based prototypes to assist musicians to capture and record ideas on the fly powered by ML models. The aim of these projects is to help expand what is possible by harnessing the power of technology.

Support high quality research

Research can be a critical first step to develop new products or businesses that are difficult to imagine today. Google continues to cultivate strong relationships with academic and research communities to fuel technological progress.

Highlights

Five researchers from University of Adelaide and Monash University received **Faculty Research Award** for 2019 which recognises world-class technical research in computer science, engineering and related fields

Six Australian researchers selected for **Research Scholar Program** in 2020 and received a grant of $87,000 to pursue collaborative research in variety of technical fields

Google TensorFlow Faculty Research Award for 2019, a highly competitive global award, awarded to UTS Distinguished Research Professor Mary-Anne Williams

Six Australian PhD students selected for a **PhD Fellowship Program** in recognition for their outstanding achievements and innovative research in computer science and related fields

Google supports and participates in the academic research community through meaningful engagement with university faculties. It does this by providing funding for academic research and supporting the next generation of researchers through fellowships, scholarships, internships and other student opportunities.

Google's **Faculty Research Award** is focussed on supporting world-class technical research in computer science, engineering and related fields at some of the world's best computer science departments. In 2019, five researchers from University of Adelaide and Monash University have received funding for one year to help them advance their research. For the 2019 awards, Google received 917 proposals from approximately 50 countries and over 330 universities, with all proposals undergoing an extensive review process involving 1,100 expert reviewers across Google who assessed the proposals on merit, innovation, and alignment with Google's research philosophy.[63]

In 2020, the Faculty Research Award was discontinued. In its place Google launched the Award for Inclusion Research (AIR) Program and the Research Scholar Program, in order to diversify Google's efforts across a larger community,

focusing on early career faculty and faculty working on positive societal initiatives. Both programs provide up to US$60,000 per team to support their research efforts.

The AIR program recognises and supports academic achievement and research in computing and technology that addresses the needs of underrepresented populations globally. The program funds topics including accessibility, AI for social good, algorithmic fairness, education, and gender bias, and other areas that aim to have a positive impact on underrepresented groups. Over 100 applications were received from over 100 universities globally, with 16 proposals chosen for funding, focused on an array of topics around diversity and inclusion, algorithmic bias, education innovation, health tools, accessibility, gender bias, AI for social good, security, and social justice.

The Research Scholar Program aims to support early-career professors who are pursuing research in fields relevant to Google. The intent of the program is to help to develop new collaborations and encourage long-term relationships amongst the scientists around the world. In 2020, there were 77 research teams who received this award, including 6 researchers from Australia.

To ensure that computer science students are supported to acquire the latest knowledge and capabilities to design responsible AI technologies, Google also offers a **TensorFlow Faculty Award**. Distinguished Research Professor Mary-Anne Williams from the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) was an inaugural recipient of this award to develop educational content with TensorFlow 2.0, Google's open-source machine learning platform. The highly

competitive award is part of Google's global program to support academics interested in teaching new, or improving existing, machine learning courses, as well as supporting Faculty working on diversity initiatives.[64]

"We are increasingly reliant on the perceptions, decisions and actions of AI, and need to develop trust and confidence in AI, to be sure it is safe and reliable and that its decision-making is transparent, accountable, and trustworthy. I am looking forward to working with our students to design responsible AI technologies that people can understand and trust. I will be helping UTS students develop exciting new approaches to eXplainable AI (XAI) by showing them how to use TensorFlow to teach AI to explain itself."

Distinguished Research Professor, Mary-Anne Williams, University of Technology Sydney

To directly support promising young talent, Google also runs a **PhD Fellowship Program**. The program aims to recognise outstanding graduate students doing exceptional and innovative research in areas relevant to computer science and related fields. Through the Fellowship, PhD candidates receive financial support and are connected to a Google Research Mentor. Some Fellowship students subsequently go on to do an internship with Google. In the latest round of awards six PhD students in Australia have been recognised for their outstanding efforts and four students in 2019.

Image courtesy of ThisisEngineering RAEng, Unsplash

Pillar 4: Elevate authoritative information

Research from an Australia 2020 report found that 48% of Australians rely on online news or social media as their main source of news, but 64% of Australians remain concerned about what is real or fake on the internet.[65] The spread of misinformation erodes public trust in news, government, and civic processes, such as elections, which can have significant consequences for democracy. Google helps elevate authoritative information to ensure that people have confidence in and access to reliable information.

Highlights

Supporting bushfires management
Developed SOS Alerts for all states impacted by the bushfires to communicate localised warning messages and bushfire advice to Australians

Helping to reach more Australians with critical information related to COVID-19
$60 million in Google Ads donated to the Australian State and Federal Governments, not-for-profits and small businesses to elevate critical information

Growing the largest social services directory
$275,000 in additional funding provided to Ask Izzy (Infoxchange) in 2020 to support people affected by bushfires and needing urgent support due to COVID-19

Supporting fact-checking for journalists
$1.5 million invested into the **COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub** to combat misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines

Surface authoritative information

Rapid digitisation has allowed people to access information at levels and speeds never seen before. It is critical that speed does not compromise quality and authoritative information in times of need. Through partnerships and new initiatives, Google has helped Australians find critical and authoritative information when they need it most.

Authoritative information during the 2019-2020 bushfire season

During the time of natural or other disasters, access to accurate, relevant, and timely information is key to helping people stay safe. As the 2019-2020 bushfire crisis was unfolding, impacting all Eastern states, Google worked with fire and emergency services to provide Australians with the most useful and authoritative information through Search, Maps and Android Notifications (see Bushfires case study). The **SOS Alerts** and **Public Alerts** provided localised updates on the fire conditions and directed people to help and safety information.

Given the devastating impact of the bushfires on people's lives, Google.org also supported Infoxchange to make urgent updates to the **Ask Izzy** website to include information on the crisis support services available to people impacted by the bushfires. The Ask Izzy website brings together a diverse range of health and welfare support services across Australia to ensure people in need can get access to vital support. The update allowed people in bushfire affected areas to get accurate and up-to-date information about help in their area.

A range of bushfire alerts.

Bushfires

Partnering with State Governments to help protect lives and property from the impact of the 2019-2020 bushfires

Challenge

Australia experienced an unprecedented, extreme bushfire season in 2019-2020 which saw 33 people tragically lose their lives, over 3,000 homes destroyed, nearly three billion animals killed or displaced, and an estimated $10 billion financial impact nationally.[66] In NSW alone, 2,500 homes were destroyed, but 14,000 homes were saved through the efforts of the NSW Rural Fire Service (**NSW RFS**) and the community.[67]

Role Google played

When the bushfires raged across Australia over the November 2019 to January 2020 period, Google searches for bushfire terms rose by 500% due to people across the country looking for authoritative information on the unfolding disaster.[68] Google responded quickly by helping State fire services to communicate their warning messages and bushfire advice to Australians in affected areas fast, accurately and at scale. This included creating SOS Alerts on Google Search and Maps, so that when people searched for bushfire related terms on Google, or for bushfire affected areas on Google Maps, SOS Alerts alerted people to the relevant danger and directed them to information (including safety tips) from the relevant State fire services. This ensured that local people were able to get accurate and timely information about how to respond to the imminent danger posed by the bushfires, and allowed the international community to accurately follow the unfolding bushfire crisis in Australia.

Working with the NSW RFS and the South Australian Country Fire Service, Google utilised Public Alerts (in addition to the SOS Alerts) to send notifications to people in fire impacted communities when they access Google Search and Maps for any reason. This allowed critical information about the unfolding bushfire situation to reach an even greater number of people. In 2021, Google anticipates that it will be able to implement Public Alerts for four additional states and territories – Queensland, the ACT, Tasmania and Western Australia.

A key part of Google's response to the bushfire crisis was ensuring that SOS Alerts and Public Alerts linked only to authoritative information from the relevant fire services. This meant that people were getting the most accurate and up to date information about the bushfires and how to respond, whilst reducing the risk of misinformation.

"Google enhances the ability to get information to people quickly about bushfires. It puts the issues front and centre of people's daily lives. They might be searching things that are not even related to the bushfires, but it gives them information and warning – puts it front and centre in their mind, it mainstreams it. Then if they want to source more detailed information, they can."

Anthony Clark, Director Communications and Engagement, NSW Rural Fire Service

By having an ongoing relationship with the fire services in Australia, Google was able to support them not only to get information out to the community, but to help them do their incredibly difficult job of dealing with the bushfires themselves. For example, due to the size of the fires, the NSW RFS mapping system couldn't handle the data. NSW RFS worked with Google to address these issues, to ensure that their team and the community could access accurate mapping of the unprecedented large fires.

"We've always had a good relationship with Google. They have helped us be proactive before and during major fire events. When bushfires hit, they take off very, very quickly, so it is important to be able to respond quickly."

Anthony Clark, Director Communications and Engagement, NSW Rural Fire Service

Impact

In February 2020, a joint State and Commonwealth Royal Commission was established in response to the unprecedented bushfire season. The Royal Commission made several recommendations and findings in its final report, including in relation to the role that data has in addressing and responding to national disasters. This included acknowledging the importance of technology and high-quality data in communicating key messages and responding to natural disasters. This emphasises the important role that Google played in getting Australians critical information when they needed it most.

Authoritative information during COVID-19

In times of need, people seek access to critical information. As the impact of COVID-19 started to ripple around the globe, Google worked with government authorities to surface authoritative information on the pandemic as the situation continued to evolve throughout 2020. On 31 January 2020, the same day that the World Health Organisation identified COVID-19 as a public health emergency, Google launched **global SOS Alerts** in English directing people to safety tips and resources.

This continued throughout 2020 with Google working to ensure that authoritative information was available on **Google Search**, **Maps** and **YouTube**, helping Australians quickly find trustworthy and reliable information when they needed it most. Australians could find the latest information on the pandemic on a local **COVID microsite** and a COVID layer was launched in Google Maps in September enabling people to see the number of active COVID cases by state in Australia and around the world. As people enthusiastically took up cycling during lockdown periods and beyond, Google Maps refreshed more than 10,000 kms of Australian bike lanes and surfaced pop-up cycleways created due to the new demand.[69]

The donation of Google Ads – approximately $60 million of free ads to Government, NFPs and SMEs – allowed authorities to elevate critical information to ensure Australians could easily find the information they needed to follow the latest health directives about COVID-19. This included information on where they could get a COVID test, about the latest social distancing and mask wearing restrictions for their transit journeys and what impact checkpoints and border crossing restrictions would make on driving trips that crossed state borders.

Google also collaborated with the public health officials to explore different technologies that could support contract tracing efforts. From April 2020, this included publishing of COVID-19 **Community Mobility Reports** that analyse aggregate, anonymised location history and provide local insights into what has changed in response to work from home, shelter in place, and other policies aimed at flattening the curve of this pandemic.[70]

To ensure that support and critical information was accessible to all Australians, Google.org provided further funding to update **Ask Izzy** with COVID-19 support information, including testing site locations. As the pandemic took hold, searches for help on Ask Izzy spiked to the highest levels in its four-year history as more people than ever sought help. The partnership with Google on the Ask Izzy project allowed Infoxchange to develop this concept and to then continue to evolve the product in response to user needs (see Infoxchange – Ask Izzy case study). It also helped to build a case for further funding. In 2020, Infoxchange was able to secure significant Federal

Government support through the Department of Social Services to enhance Ask Izzy to better respond in times of crisis. Infoxchange also was successful in receiving funding through Services Australia to power the disaster relief and recovery tool **Recovery Connect**.

"The Morrison Government is committed to helping Australians through the pandemic and by supporting Ask Izzy we're connecting Australians with a variety of crucial Government, charitable and other services."

Anne Rustin, Minister for Families and Social Services

During the first two weeks of COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, Ask Izzy saw[71]:

145%
Increase in searches for Centrelink

92%
Increase in searches for emergency relief

40%
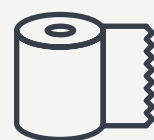Increase in searches for food

Most common search terms:

Housing

Coronavirus

Food

Toilet paper

Ask Izzy on a smart phone.

CASE STUDY

Infoxchange – Ask Izzy

Supporting communities in crisis through bushfire & COVID-19 response and recovery

Challenge

In 2015, after Infoxchange won the 2014 Google.org Impact Challenge, Google supported Infoxchange with an initial $500,000 Google.org grant to launch Ask Izzy. Ask Izzy is powered by Australia's largest up-to-date directory of health and welfare services, connecting people in need with vital support. Initially designed to support people experiencing homelessness, today Ask Izzy helps anyone in need across Australia whether that be finding a hot meal, accessing family violence support services, financial counselling or somewhere safe to sleep for the night.

2020 was an extremely challenging year for people across in Australia, dealing first with the extreme bushfire season and then with the impact of COVID-19. This dramatically increased the demand for crisis services.

Role Google played

In 2020, Google supported Infoxchange with a further $275,000 grant to support people experiencing vulnerability as a result of the bushfires. As the bushfires took hold of much of Australia in January 2020, Ask Izzy quickly released a bushfire support category that was updated daily, to direct people to urgent support services.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Google.org provided further support to Infoxchange to update Ask Izzy with COVID-19 resources, including information about testing site locations and support for people who had lost their jobs.

In addition, Google provided $480,000 worth of Google Ads each year to support Ask Izzy as well as free access to the Google Maps platform, and has provided access to Google volunteers to help develop the Ask Izzy platform.

The advertising support was vital as Infoxchange launched the 'unexpected turn' campaign for Ask Izzy. The campaign shared the message that many things in life are out of our control, any of us can face unexpected hardships, and that Ask Izzy is a place to go for help.

Impact

Ask Izzy has enormous value as a crisis support tool for people in need with over **2.2 million searches for support in 2020** alone. In March 2020, during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, searches on Ask Izzy spiked to their highest levels in its five-year history with record levels of searches for emergency relief and Centrelink services, and as the pandemic continued, searches for mental health and family violence services.

By connecting people in need with vital and appropriate support services, Ask Izzy has been a lifeline through a period of such uncertainty. It also empowers people by allowing them to choose the service that best meets their needs and encourages them to connect to services in a non-confrontational way through digital platforms.

Importantly, Google's agility meant that Infoxchange received the funding to update Ask Izzy very quickly, allowing urgent updates to be made to the service directory. This allowed people to get accurate and up to date information about the support they could access in their area.

Further, Google supported Infoxchange to successfully secure Australian Government funding through the Department of Social Services to enhance Ask Izzy even further to better respond in times of crisis.[72]

"Google is an outstanding partner – they see our success as their success. They were a critical first mover in the development of Ask Izzy. They took a real chance on us."

David Spriggs, CEO of Infoxchange

Target the spread of misinformation

Tackling misinformation is a complex challenge which requires coordinated action with a broad range of experts and organisations. Google works together with newsrooms, fact-checkers, community organisations and academic researchers to support initiatives that help curb misinformation.

Supporting coronavirus fact-checking and access to scientific expertise

The speed and impact of COVID-19 in Australia, and its significance as a global issue, has meant there has been ample opportunities for misinformation to spread quickly and to have a significant detrimental impact on the community. Globally, Google provided $9.4 million in funding to fact-checkers and NFPs fighting misinformation around the world, with an immediate focus on coronavirus.[73]

Access to primary expert sources during an evolving public health crisis is both challenging and fundamental for journalists covering the story. To make it easier, Google has been supporting the **Australian Science Media Centre**, creators of **Scimex.org**, to connect fact-checkers and reporters to expert individuals and organisations around the COVID-19 crisis. ASMC worked with more than 85 COVID-19 experts and organised 60 expert reactions from leaders in the fields of science and health, including explainers, briefings and myth busters on COVID-19, all of which informed more than 30,000 news stories in Australia and overseas. The funds also allowed the Centre to hire an additional media officer for six months.[74]

Building on these efforts, in December 2020 Google launched the **COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub**, a global alliance of Science Media Centres and public health experts. The hub is funded by a $1.5 million investment from Google and led by the Australian Science Media Centre and Meedan. The Hub will contain information about COVID-19 vaccines in seven different languages, helping journalists around the world to report on COVID-19 vaccines and the science behind them more accurately, and combating misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines.[75]

Collaboration is a crucial component of journalism's response to a story as complicated and all-encompassing as COVID-19. For this reason, Google also increased its support for **First Draft**, a not-for-profit organisation which provides an online resource hub, dedicated training and crisis simulations for reporters covering COVID-19. As a result of this support, First Draft was able to launch its first bureau in APAC based at the Centre for Media Transition at the University of Technology Sydney. Google also collaborated with the **Walkley Foundation** to provide training and necessary fact-checking resources to journalists across Australia, and worked with the **ABC** to launch a dedicated News Briefing on Google Assistant focused on COVID-19.

To ensure Google's own platforms do not promote false or misleading information, Google has taken steps to stem the spread of misinformation about COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines on Search, YouTube or through apps on the Play Store. This has included taking down thousands of YouTube videos containing dangerous or misleading coronavirus information and videos that promote medically unproven methods to prevent coronavirus in place of seeking medical treatment.[76]

"The enormous impact of this pandemic has meant that scientists and pharmaceutical companies have had to go into overdrive to produce vaccines in record time. With so many vaccines in various stages of development, it can be very confusing for journalists and the public and this is where we hope to help. It's now more critical than ever that we all have access to clear information about these vaccines as they are being developed."

Dr Susannah Eliott, CEO of the Australian Science Media Centre

"Recognising the threat of misinformation has become an additional vector for the spread of infectious diseases, as well as a significant barrier to vaccine adherence, we see a networked approach to addressing information equity challenges as a critical public health need. This involves the global science community collaborating, providing fact-checkers and media partners with reliable, and time-sensitive health information needed to effectively report and respond to the vaccine related information needs of their audiences. We are honoured to work with the Science Media Centre of Australia and their partner Science Media Centres on this critical initiative."

Nat Gyenes, Director Meedan Digital Health Lab

Google Search results page.

Pillar 5: Support causes important to Australians

In an unprecedented year like 2020, not-for-profits have come under pressure having to respond to urgent human, environmental and social challenges. With 67% of charities reporting a significant decrease in fundraising, and a drop in volunteer activities during 2020, financial support has been desperately needed.[77]

Highlights

Committed funding to social causes
$6.5 million contributed to Australian NFPs during 2020, in addition to funds distributed through annual grants, sponsorship and program funding

Supporting diversity
Established $350,000 YouTube scholarship to support three students from diverse backgrounds to study at the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA)

Supporting LGBTQIA+ community
Awarded $40,000 grant to Black Rainbow to establish an Indigenous LGBTQIA+ Futures Fund

In 2020, Google.org Australia contributed over $2.6 million to not-for-profits and another $3.9 million through the employee giving program. Donations went to diverse causes such as homelessness (Australian Red Cross), mental health (BlackDog Institute, the Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma), and the environment (WWF Australia & NSW Fire Service). In total, donations were provided to approximately 350 Australian not-for-profits. The National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) was one of the organisations to receive a major gift, which was used to enhance diversity in the arts sector (see NIDA case study).

In 2020, Google has also continued to support Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras to help promote pride and respect for LGBTQIA+ community. The support included funds for the festival itself, as well as financial support for the Mardi Gras Community Grants program and Grow with Google digital skills training for small businesses. Sixteen community and not-for-profit groups received funding through the Grants program. Additionally, Google.org has provided a $40,000 grant to **Black Rainbow** to create an Indigenous LGBTQIA+ Futures Fund to support the advancement of Indigenous LGBTQIA+ community members who can demonstrate they are high achievers and are excelling in their chosen field. Google.org also partnered with Deloitte and Energy Australia in supporting the **Outstanding 50 LGBTI+ Leaders Report** which recognises and celebrates remarkable role models across the country.

Further, Google Australia staff spent 2,590 hours volunteering in 2020. In most cases, volunteering involved Google staff sharing their skills with their chosen organisations. For example, Googlers supported Winyama, an Indigenous owned and operated consultancy, to create relevant and culturally appropriate Indigenous mapping iconography.

Image courtesy of NIDA.

CASE STUDY
National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) – YouTube Scholarships
Supporting diversity within a fine arts sector

Challenge

The National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) is Australia's leading centre for education and training in the performing arts. NIDA runs six Bachelor of Fine Arts undergraduate courses, spanning acting, design for performance, costume-making, props-making, set construction and technical theatre and stage management. NIDA is currently working to increase the diversity of its students, and in turn the diversity of participants in the arts world.

Role Google played

YouTube has committed $135,000 worth of scholarship funds for three creative individuals to study at NIDA. Commencing in 2021, one scholarship of approximately $44,000 will be awarded each year for the next three years, for a student from a background which has historically been underrepresented on screen and stage. Successful applicants will receive the scholarship for three years, which they can use either for living expenses or to cover the full cost of their NIDA tuition fees.

The inaugural 2021 YouTube Scholarship has been awarded to young Brisbane creative **Michiru Encinas**, whose dream was to study costume-making at NIDA. NIDA's Bachelor of Fine Arts (Costume) accepts only six students per year. Michiru started the Bachelor of Fine Arts, Costume course at NIDA on 1 February 2021.

"Not only will the YouTube Scholarship help me financially, but it also encourages and inspires me to work hard at NIDA, and contribute to an industry that is hopefully more diverse and vibrant in the future."

Michiru Encinas, NIDA YouTube Scholarship recipient

Impact

The YouTube Scholarships are the largest scholarships ever to be awarded by NIDA, giving them the potential to have significant impact for the recipients.

"Given the size of the YouTube scholarship, it makes studying at NIDA possible for people that otherwise wouldn't see NIDA as a viable option."

Liz Hughes, CEO of NIDA

NIDA wants to educate the next generation of story tellers and increase the diversity of those storytellers. By making NIDA more accessible and increasing the diversity of its students, NIDA hopes that underrepresented groups will start seeing themselves represented in Australian stories. The YouTube Scholarship has an important role to play in this.

"The inaugural YouTube NIDA Scholarship for 2021 is just one of our initiatives, supporting Australia's creative economy. YouTube will continue to evolve our initiatives in the coming years, making sure that Australia has a thriving creative sector into the future."

Ed Miles, Head of YouTube Content Partnerships

Google's Community Support Initiatives

Google is committed to expanding the opportunities that technology offers by investing in communities, individuals and local economies. It does so through a range of initiatives that leverage Google's global talent and resources and are implemented by Google's local team. Cultural, social and economic circumstances inform priorities that are set for each initiative at a local level.

Google Australia

Google Australia started with just one person in 2002, and has grown to over 1,800 people across Sydney and Melbourne today. With more than 700 software engineers in Australia, Google's local team works on products including Google Maps, Chrome and Photos.

Google Australia is committed to preparing Australian businesses and communities for tomorrow's digital future. In addition to the initiatives described below, Google Australia provides grants and sponsorships to local community organisations and industry events, and offers internships, placements and scholarships for Aussie students.

Google.org: Contributing time, money and volunteer hours to create a world that works for everyone

Google.org, the philanthropic arm of Google, has been established to help solve some of humanity's biggest challenges. Google.org connects innovative NFP organisations and social enterprises with Google's resources to accelerate their impact. The support is provided through a combination of funding, innovation and technical expertise. Google.org also connects NFP organisations with Googlers to receive donations and volunteering support.

Google for Nonprofits: Helping not-for-profit organisations publicise their mission, work more efficiently, engage supporters, and fundraise online

Google for Nonprofits offers eligible organisations access to Google products and tools at no or heavily discounted charge to help them find new donors and volunteers, work more efficiently, and get supporters to take action. This includes access to Google Workspace for Nonprofits, Ad Grants, the YouTube Nonprofit Program, and Google Earth and Maps.

Grow with Google: Ensuring more people have access to the skills they need to succeed in a digital world

Grow with Google is an initiative that draws on Google's 20-year history of building products, platforms, and services that help people and businesses grow. The aim is to help everyone across Australia – those who make up the workforce of today and the students who will drive the workforce of tomorrow – access the best of Google's training and tools to grow their skills, careers, and businesses.

Google for Education: Closing education equity gaps through technology, tools and training

Google for Education works with schools, educators and community organisations to ensure everyone has access to high quality learning experiences and are equipped with the skills they need to be prepared for the future. This includes providing access to Google's Education tools (Google Workspace for Education, Google Classroom, Chromebooks), teaching resources, and computer science programs and activities for students and educators.

Google News Initiative: Building a stronger future for journalism

Google News Initiative (GNI) works with the news industry to help journalism thrive in the digital age. It assists news partners by building products to meet the needs of news organisations and grow their business, collaborating with news organisations to solve important business and industry-wide challenges, and developing and supporting programs to drive innovation across the news industry.

Google Arts & Culture: Bringing the world's art and culture online for everyone

Google Arts & Culture works with cultural institutions and artists around the world to preserve and bring the world's art and culture online so it is accessible to anyone, anywhere. This includes helping institutions to digitise, manage and publish their collections online, at no charge.

Image courtesy of stem.T4L, Unsplash.

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