

DIGITAL GAP INITIATIVE TAKES CALL FOR ACTION ON DIGITAL INCLUSION TO PARLIAMENT

On 12 November 2015, [Digital Gap Initiative](#) will call on the government to [kick-start serious discussion](#) on what is being done to ensure access for up to 1 in 5 Australians currently locked out of the digital marketplace.

The DGI launch event at federal Parliament, hosted by cross-party representatives Senators Rachel Siewert, Jo Lindgren and Carol Brown, follows DGI launch events in Sydney and Melbourne, and coincides with [World Usability Day](#). The Canberra event features a panel discussion with Coles, the Digital Transformation Office (tbc), IBM, NAB, PwC Australia, AccessHQ and Media Access Australia, chaired by DGI President, Ted McCoskey.

"The panel will focus on 'Innovation'. How can Australia be innovative in this domain? What are business and government doing to ensure that when they innovate, they innovate for everybody?" Mr McCoskey explains.

When asked what most service providers are doing in this space, McCoskey answered: "not nearly enough".

To remedy this situation, DGI is [calling on the Government](#) to formulate national, compliance-based standards on digital accessibility. The legal system presently does not create awareness, and facilitate enforcement, of digital access like the *Access to Premises* standards do for building access.

The sooner Australia has compliance-based standards, the better. Last year, DGI founder, Gisele Mesnage sued Coles for overlooking accessibility when upgrading its online shopping website. The proceedings [settled](#) amicably and Coles has taken significant steps forward, but the case brought to light a problem that is not going to fix itself.

And the problem is not only with websites. Millions of Australians who experience vision, hearing and dexterity limitations due to disability or age can't pay using a touch-screen EFTPOS tablet and wouldn't be able to tell what temperature the thermostat in their fridge is set to because it's a touch-screen and just beeps. This is the digital gap, a phenomenon that is key for Australia to address, especially given its ageing population.

Voluntary standards have repeatedly proved an unsatisfactory solution. To take but one example: [CommBank's Albert EFTPOS tablet](#) was released this year with no accessibility features, despite the Australian Bankers' Association *Voluntary Accessibility Standards* and CommBank's own *Accessibility and Inclusion Plan*.

DGI remains positive that real change is achievable. Gisele maintains, "Digitalisation is *the* most promising innovation for real social inclusion - technology is just so adaptable. And yet while ramps in the physical environment are the norm, digital accessibility - the ramp of the digital environment – remains a distant promise".

When: Thursday, 12 November 2015, 10:00–11:30 AM

*All media attending the event need to apply for a parliamentary pass.