unlocking creativity

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backing local innovators 

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jobs and prosperity

Territory Labor's Innovation Strategy

November 2015
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Territorians prove every day that they are at the forefront of innovative solutions to some of the most complex issues faced by our communities.

Through strong multidisciplinary partnerships, new and expanded use of technology to deliver and improve services, and big picture thinking about the opportunities that exist for new industries, this potential is being unlocked right across urban, rural and remote areas.

Territorians need a Government that properly recognises innovation and understands that the growth of digital technologies across the world is radically changing the way we live, work and play, and is vital to ensuring that the Territory does not get left behind.

The shifting global mind set to more collaborative, flexible and digital solutions to some of our most complex issues is an exciting one that holds incredible potential for the Northern Territory for those willing to embrace them.

Labor believes creating a culture of innovation must start at the top, and must be reflected in every area of Government. This includes, but is certainly not limited to, expanding and diversifying our economic growth, the delivery of housing services, education, health, water and land management, renewable energy, and procurement processes.

Labor will create the climate for innovators to succeed and we will support Territory innovators in turning ideas into thriving businesses.

Labor believes such a culture must be reflected in our relationships with all sectors and innovators, recognising that it is often innovators, entrepreneurs and sector experts who are best placed to scope, prototype and scale new solutions.

We must be a creator and not just a consumer of new technologies, partnerships and ideas.

Michael Gunner
Territory Labor Leader
Our Strategy in Action

Funding and Investment

1. Introduce a formal mentor/network component to new and existing grants programs

Startup capital is critical for local business in commercialising new and innovative ideas. However, the success of local businesses and ideas is not reliant on startup capital alone; access to mentors and established networks can be vital to the success of local entrepreneurs, and Government has an opportunity to play an expanded role in establishing connections between established businesses and those who are just starting out. Innovators particularly need support, mentorship and advice in taking good ideas from the drawing board to a commercial reality. Investing in support for innovators to achieve commercialisation will boost the success of local ideas and entrepreneurship.

Labor will ensure that the business support grants programs of Government include assistance with accessing this support.

In addition, Labor understands that existing and established business seeking to grow and expand through innovative initiatives need to be supported in this transition. Support from a Labor Government grants program will not be limited to start up projects alone but will include support for the growth of existing business.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do Territory innovators and business need this support? What other areas of support should be provided?

2. Increase the funds to the Business Innovation Support Initiatives (BISI)

Labor supports the BISI grant program and will expand it in government. Labor will provide an additional $1million to this grants program to encourage innovators across the Territory.
3. Expand the reach of the BISI grants program

Labor will ensure that Territorians in remote and regional Northern Territory will have the opportunity to attract grants. Labor believes that there are many innovative Territorians living in the regions and remotely. Innovation has driven the success of these communities. Labor will ensure Innovation Roadshows featuring the extent of government support and seeking out innovative ideas will be conducted annually across the Territory.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

*Does this provide enough reach for the program? How else can we ensure all Territorians have an opportunity to bring attention to their ideas?*

4. Encourage the development of local “Angel Investor” groups in the Territory

In addition to expanding BISI grants and providing seeding funding to assist ideas to progress to commercialisation Labor will work with the business community to establish Angel Investor groups in the Territory. Typically these groups provide $300 000 to $1 million worth of funding to bring ideas to commercial fruition. The size of the Territory economy makes the establishment of local investor groups more difficult. The Government does have a role to play in encouraging local business as well as investors from around Australia and internationally to be engaged in supporting Territory innovation.

Labor will work with business and investors to build “Angel investor” groups. We will work with local innovators to promote ideas to investor groups nationally and internationally.
**Partnering**

*Labor understands that the Government alone cannot and should not drive innovation through the Territory.*

We will embrace and engage with the local, national and international private sector to open the Territory to a wave of innovation, ideas, entrepreneurship and exciting developments.

We will work closely with Charles Darwin University, the Menzies School of Health, research centres, indigenous organisations such as the Centre for Appropriate Technology, the Territory business community and others to drive innovation across the Territory.

**5. Innovation Hubs**

Innovation hubs are a place where our creative minds across a multitude of fields can come together to grow their ideas, share their knowledge and network in a collaborative and supportive space. They are places where people can work together on finding new solutions to a range of challenges facing the community, test assumptions and feed into the broader vision for the Northern Territory.

There are a range of models across the world for innovation hubs, and Territory Labor believes that hubs in the Territory should reflect the uniqueness of the Territory.

A Territory Labor Government will:

- Fund a scoping study to identify opportunities for innovation hubs
- Partner with creative Territory minds and our educational institutions, especially Charles Darwin University, to find the best fit for us
- Invite and encourage the creative skills available across Australia and internationally to contribute to the development and growth of innovation hubs
- Pilot an innovation hub model
- Invest in an expansion of innovation hubs across the NT, with a localised focus

**INDUSTRY INPUT - WHAT DO YOU THINK**

Industry input into the creation of this strategy paper has provided various models for establishing innovation hubs.
Some industry advice is to allow innovation hubs to organically grow and establish their own agenda, deal with the issues they wish to deal with.

Other industry advice is to also seek to prescribe the work of some hubs- i.e. innovation hubs focused on specific issues such as North Australian Development, Smart Cities etc.

What do you think?

Territory Labor will work in partnership with sectors and education institutions to deliver these hotbeds for creative thinking in the Territory. This would also include advocacy to the Australian Government who are assisting with pilots of such arrangements in other states across Australia.

Examples of these include Hub Melbourne, Singapore and Sydney; the South Australia Innovation Hub Pilot on aged care related issues.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do you support the establishment of innovation hubs?
6. Hosting innovation/entrepreneurial focused events with attached seed funding

Across Australia a range of startup, pitch up, and hackathon events have been established designed to encourage collaboration and innovative thinking across a range of sectors and policy areas, and, most importantly, to invest in ideas at a grass roots level.

Such events can provide opportunities for local startups to pitch their business case, and/or for local innovators to come together to ‘hack’ a problem with the incentive of investment, access to sounding boards and potential mentors/collaborators, a safe space to test ideas with like-minded networks, and the possibility of funding to scale up.

The Territory already has a calendar of events aimed at the business community. Labor will expand this calendar to have a strong focus on enterprise, and celebrating home grown innovation across sectors.

Labor will ensure that these events are accompanied by opportunities to immediately attract seed funding for outstanding proposals to drive them towards commercialization.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What events do you believe should be on the Territory calendar?
How should this seed funding for ideas be applied?
Growing Our Own

Labor believes it is important for the Territory to grow our own innovators and to encourage young Territorians and local business people to develop an innovative mind set.

Labor will take action to encourage and support this.

7. Innovator in Residence

A Labor Government will invest in creating stronger links with local, national and international innovators through the exchange of ideas and sharing of resources. One way to achieve this is to implement an ‘Innovator in Residence’ program that would see innovators, entrepreneurs and experts, take part in residential terms within Government, with a view to focus on particular complex challenges, and to grow their own networks and availability of resources to shape and scale up their ideas.

Similar programs have operated in other jurisdictions with positive outcomes, including the ‘Thinkers in Residence’ Program in South Australia. Recommendations then implemented by Government would be reported on, and opportunities for further projects with the private and non-government sectors identified.

8. Preparing young Territorians by supporting the expansion of enterprise education in schools

Labor will ensure that all schools receive advice and training in newly emerging industries.

Many jobs that we know and understand today will change significantly over the next five years and unrecognisably over the next ten. It is critical for students that schools keep up with these changes.

Addressing the Digital Divide

Labor will invest in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics) education from the early years of schooling. We will do so in partnership with the private sector. Corporations such as Telstra already deliver packages in digital literacy across the country and with leadership from Government such programs could be expanded into our schools. Labor will build partnerships between our schools and innovation focused organisations such as InspiredNT, the Territory Chapter of Inspiring Australia who have a commitment and charter focused on profiling STEAM.
Labor will support programs such as the $20 Boss program in collaboration with the Foundation for Young Australians, which sees young Australians develop their entrepreneurial skills in a program that aligns to mathematics and business curriculum.

The *New Work Order* Report by the Foundation for Young Australians estimates that 70% of young Australians have first job roles that, due to automation, will look very different or disappear over the next decade\(^i\). An increasing number of roles in the future will require digital skills, and many are training for jobs that could well be impacted heavily by the move to automation. This makes critical and analytic thinking, enterprise skills and digital literacy an ever growing need for our young people.

### 9. Train students in coding

Labor will train students from Primary School onwards in coding. Coding is the language and the text of the modern digital world. Teaching Territory kids to code gives them the best possible chance to take advantage of the opportunities of an increasingly digital world.

### 10. Invest in upskilling the digital literacy of Territory teachers and trainers

To ensure Territory schools are able to maintain their currency with changes and the growth in technology Labor will work with schools to implement regular opportunities for teachers and trainers to be upskilled. We will host educator and trainer professional development days as part of innovation events.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

*What other initiatives do we need in our schools to ensure students are keeping up with the new technology and innovation across the nation and the world?*
Tell us what you think

This discussion paper is a part of an ongoing discussion which has already involved meeting many parents, children, professionals, workers and organisation right across the Territory.

We have also held three public forums to date with more planned.

We want to hear from you regarding the plans outlined in this paper and any other questions or suggestions you have.

Tell us what you think about the ideas in this document.

You can let us know your thoughts by emailing opposition.leader@nt.gov.au or by calling 08 8928 6668.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts and continuing our discussion in this crucial policy area for the Territory’s future.
End notes

i (https://hubmelbourne.meshspaces.com)


iii New Work Order, Foundation for Young Australians, August 2015.