

From: Elena Douglas
Sent: Monday, 21 September 2015
To: Committee, Economics & Industry Standing
Cc:
Subject: Submission to the Standing Committee on Economics and Industry: Inquiry into technological and service innovation in WA

Dear Standing Committee

Re: The State Mind report

Knowledge Society was pleased to meet with the Committee and present our State of Mind - WA's new landscape of innovation and opportunity report. The theme of the report is that Western Australia stands on the shoulders of a massive technical achievement. This world-class resources province faces an era of new opportunities: one in which the world is hungry not just for minerals, but for high technology. The twenty-first century is when the knowledge revolution will have its full effect and Western Australia now needs to build the knowledge and data infrastructure that will build on our current achievements and hold us in good stead in developing the knowledge industries of tomorrow.

The Square Kilometre Array, which will be the most powerful radio telescope in the world, brings a new type of human capital to the state – the world's best physicists, engineers and inventors – who will join existing research institutes and centres for innovation. Western Australia is well placed to pursue the most profound technical frontiers of the next decade.

Economic revolutions change the way that people think about knowledge. When technology changes rapidly, people look at the world differently. The twenty-first century – already in the throes of an economic revolution – will be defined by businesses, governments and institutions subjecting themselves, their sectors, procedures and technologies to deep scrutiny.

Western Australia is not merely a world-class mining province, but can become a thriving centre for innovation and technology that will lead the nation into the next century.

Every dollar of income, every tonne of ore, represents a complex web of technical problems that have been solved. Western Australia has the conditions from which new industries can emerge. This is a once-in-a generation opportunity.

A global footprint

State of Mind recounts Western Australia's recent history from a new perspective. It emphasises the rush of foreign investment and human capital that arrived here as a result of Western Australia's significant role providing Asian markets with the minerals and energy they craved.

This state-enriching foreign investment helped to build important infrastructure, both visible – trains, skyscrapers, theatres and other public works – and invisible: the talent and intellect that international knowledge workers have imparted to locals. This enduring brainpower will determine our state's future prosperity.

It's a talent competition

State of Mind illuminates the changing face of Western Australia's workforce. The state will never be the same again. Mining and energy production have become technology-rich activities. The state has absorbed large amounts of brainpower and clever human capital – all the new engineers, technicians, researchers and executives from around the world. A wave of engineering talent has made Perth its home. The state's success as a knowledge economy pivots on this talent.

Computing power to unlock the secrets of the universe

Western Australia was recently successful in winning – with South Africa – the bid to host the Square Kilometre Array, a series of powerful radio telescopes that promise to reveal facts about the origin and nature of the Universe. The Pawsey Centre's acutely powerful supercomputer has been built to support this endeavour.

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Western Australia must focus on collaboration and collective research endeavours: it is only when the components of a network are connected that it can reach its cumulative power and big

problems are solved. Deeper alliances between universities, government and business are an opportunity to pursue this critical mass.

Knowledge Society, in partnership with UWA and its Energy & Minerals Institute, created State of Mind to help Western Australia tell its story in a powerful new way. Its ambition is to encourage new perspectives on the state's recent achievements and to stimulate policies and choices that allow it to capitalise on a rapidly changing landscape: to consolidate Western Australia's status as a knowledge economy and a regional centre for innovation. The raw material is knowledge; our prosperity depends on what we do with it.

The next step

Knowledge Society believes a critical step in the State's development to be a services, knowledge and innovation driven economy is to change the narrative of Western Australia. We believe what is required is a major public knowledge campaign about the State's existing achievement and the potential for us to develop further and faster as an innovative state. We believe the State of Mind campaign should be extended and strengthened to tell a stronger range of stories.

The campaign would be a bipartisan, cross-sector, multi-University initiative which brings together all leading players in the Western Australian knowledge economy. This is a priority in order to galvanise the collaborations and transformations that must occur if Western Australia is to rise to the opportunity presented by the knowledge revolutions taking place.

We present the detailed proposal to the committee for consideration.

We would be delighted to expand on these themes as witnesses to the Standing Committee or to provide additional information as requested.

Thank you for the opportunity of making this submission.

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