Building the Peel’s digital future

November 2012
This strategy has been prepared by Explor Consulting Pty Ltd for Regional Development Australia Peel Inc.

Explor Consulting is the leader in digital futures consulting.

We help communities and their governments to plan and build better futures, taking advantage of the opportunities of digital technologies and broadband services.

Explor works with governments and organisations at all levels: local, regional, state, territory, provincial and national.

We provide advice, we help develop digital strategies, we facilitate the funding and initiation of projects and we provide management assistance.

Explor’s people have unique insights into how digital technologies and broadband services can be exploited to support economic, social and environmental development.
Table of Contents

The Peel’s digital future ........................................................................................................................................................................ 1
Strategies to build a great future ........................................................................................................................................................ 2
Setting the scene .................................................................................................................................................................................. 3
The Peel’s communities must invest in their digital future .................................................................................................................. 4
Digital technologies help communities to develop ................................................................................................................................ 5
The Peel is a strong, unique and diverse region ..................................................................................................................................... 6
The Peel aspires to a great future ......................................................................................................................................................... 8
Digital strategies and actions to build a great future ........................................................................................................................... 9
Making it happen..................................................................................................................................................................................... 17
The Peel’s digital future

The Peel Region is one the fastest growing and most geographically diverse regions of Western Australia. The five local governments of the Peel are determined to build a prosperous, socially inclusive and sustainable future for their communities. The advent of the National Broadband Network (NBN) and the potential of other digital technologies present new opportunities for economic, social and environmental development in the region. A number of communities in the Peel such as Mandurah, Byford, South Yunderup, Ravenswood, Pinjarra and Waroona will be amongst the first in Australia to gain ultra-speed broadband connections through the NBN.

This digital futures strategy has been prepared to enable the communities of the Peel to capitalise on the benefits of broadband and digital technologies. Regional Development Australia Peel Incorporated (RDA Peel) commissioned Explor Consulting to prepare the strategy.

This plan proposes a vision for the Peel’s future, enhanced by broadband and digital technologies:

**The Peel will be a prosperous, sustainable and socially inclusive region, made up of many distinct communities, where people and businesses confidently use digital technology to enrich the way they live, work, learn, create and connect.**

The following goals are proposed to support this vision:

**Life**
1. People of all backgrounds and ages in the Peel will have the confidence, capability and access to use digital technologies to support fulfilling, creative and healthy lives.
2. People will use online services and access digital resources in ways that promote healthy, active, safe, enriching and socially connected living.
3. Online services available for residents and visitors will be rich, extensive and easy to use.

**Work**
4. The Peel will have a diverse and resilient economic base, with a variety of different businesses, including home based businesses, able to survive and thrive in the region through access to broadband services and other technologies.
5. The diverse economic base, enabled by technology, will support an improved level of employment sustainability and a greater range of employment occupations.
6. Professionals, freelancers and members of the “creative class” will be attracted to work and live in the region, supported by good access to digital technologies and services.
7. Existing businesses will use digital technologies to grow their market shares, to improve productivity, to enhance their knowledge resources and to build new networks of suppliers and partners.
8. The region will support the establishment of new businesses of all sizes by offering digitally enabled facilities, comprehensive online information, access to advice and responsive online government services.

**Learning**
9. People living and working in the Peel will make greater use of online services and digital resources for education and training, and thereby have access to a wider range of courses.
10. Businesses in the Peel will be able to provide a wider range of training at lower cost, through the use of online services and digital resources.

**Community**
11. The Peel will comprise many distinct communities, with flourishing voluntary sectors and active community organisations that use digital technologies to connect with their members and communities.
12. The Peel’s communities will use digital technologies to celebrate and promote their unique identities and heritage to their residents and visitors.
13. The Peel will be served by local governments that use digital technologies to provide effective and efficient local services based on local innovation and the sharing of resources with other local governments.
14. The communities of the Peel, particularly the smaller communities that are some distance from major population centres, will have better access to government and commercial services, through the use of online services and digital resources.
15. Social disadvantage and isolation will be reduced by using online services to better connect people, improve the delivery of community services and help provide people with basic skills.

**Environment**
16. The Peel’s residents, visitors and investors will have a greater understanding of the region’s unique environment, ecosystems and heritage through the availability of a rich set of online resources and information.
17. The Peel will have a lower carbon footprint and lower energy consumption due to the use of online services and smart infrastructure.
Strategies to build a great future

To achieve the vision and goals, this plan proposes six digital technology strategies to be pursued by the Peel’s regional development organisations and local governments.

1. Lead and collaborate on digital technologies

The regional development organisations and local governments should commit to a digital strategy and establish sound arrangements for leadership, collaboration and the management of agreed actions. They should promote the strategy and become good exemplars of modern digitally enabled organisations.

2. Extend access to digital infrastructure

Digital infrastructure should be extended so that there are more public outdoor spaces and shared indoor spaces where people who are working, learning or enjoying their leisure time can access broadband services through computers and mobile devices.

3. Celebrate and promote local communities

The Peel’s communities should build on their greatest assets: their people, their locations and their heritages. They should create and present a rich array of digital content and digital stories about their communities to potential visitors, to potential investors and most importantly, to the people who live, work and learn in each district.

4. Build household capacity and confidence

There should be active campaigns to build understanding and confidence about digital living for the Peel’s households. There should also be campaigns to encourage developers and builders to construct new homes that are digital ready.

5. Develop the small business sector’s capacity

There should be practical programs to build capacity and confidence in the region’s small business sector. These programs should offer practical assistance from locally based, trusted and competent people.

6. Enhance access to local services

The Peel’s regional development organisations should advocate and facilitate the adoption of innovative service delivery methods by the various government and commercial service providers so that access to services is improved for smaller communities.

Transport choices in the western world are changing and in countries such as the United States, private ownership rates for cars are now falling. New online services and apps allow people to share car rides, share their travel costs and reduce their carbon footprints. San Francisco now has competing online services for ride sharing including one run by a company called Zimride, named by the company’s founder after the way he saw people in Zimbabwe share their rides on mini-buses. Ride sharing services such as Sydney’s GoGet are becoming popular in Australia’s cities, but they also provide new transport opportunities for people in Australia’s regional areas.
Setting the scene

Peel’s five local governments and its regional development organisations are pursuing better futures for the region’s diverse communities, built on prosperity, social inclusion and sustainability. They are also seeking to add to the region’s vibrancy while preserving its regional identity.

Broadband services and other digital technologies can help communities to create their better futures but the most successful communities are those that adopt a strategic approach, with projects and actions that match the unique characteristics and opportunities of the communities.

RDA Peel commissioned this digital futures strategy as a planning resource to guide collective action by the regional development organisations (RDA Peel and the Peel Development Commission) and the local governments. This is also a document to help each of Peel’s local governments to pursue strategies that match the unique characteristics and opportunities of their localities.

The strategy offers a vision of a better future for the region, enabled by digital technologies and a set of proposed strategies to achieve that vision.

This plan has been prepared by Explor Consulting, a consulting firm that specialises in developing digital strategies and in helping communities and their governments to plan and build better futures, taking advantage of the opportunities of digital technologies and broadband services. It was prepared in October 2012 through research and consultations with many people from Peel’s diverse communities, local governments and regional development organisations. It also built on earlier work undertaken by Explor Consulting to prepare a digital futures strategy for the City of Mandurah.

Explor acknowledges the time, advice and insights provided by those community members, council staff and regional development organisation staff, all of which were of great value. Explor particularly appreciated the support provided by the staff of RDA Peel.

“Homegrown and Handmade” is one of the Peel’s great small business success stories.

Kallista Bolton swapped her Sydney based marketing career for a rural life on a 10 acre olive farm just outside of Boddington. In 2010, she started selling original textile products at local markets. She soon added a collection of healthy gourmet cookies to the stall and the “Crossman Cookie Company” was born specialising in nutritious and delicious wholefood cookies. Later, she added gourmet olive oils and other delicious local products.

As well as the local market stall, Kallista started marketing her products online. She has used online media including Facebook and YouTube to promote her high quality products and has created an online store.

Kallista now has customers for her exquisite products throughout the world.
The Peel’s communities must invest in their digital future

A number of communities in the Peel will be amongst the first in Australia to gain ultra-speed broadband connections through the NBN, but this is only one element in the array of digital technologies that are transforming the way we live and work. Over recent decades there have been dramatic developments in these digital technologies:

- High speed computing
- The miniaturisation of electronic equipment
- Mobile phones and mobile devices
- The Internet
- The digitisation of information and audio-visual materials.

We now regularly use email, the web, social media (such as Facebook and Twitter), smartphones and mobile tablet devices. These technologies have become affordable, pervasive and inter-connected. We – our families, our businesses, our community organisations and our government institutions – are instantly and globally connected in ways that were previously unimaginable.

The big changes are in the way we are using the technologies to do things very differently. Individuals of all ages have changed the way they work, relax, communicate, learn and shop. Many businesses have changed the way they interact with their customers, their suppliers and their staff. Governments have changed the way they deliver their services and engage with their citizens.

Digital technologies are transformative and disruptive. For example:

- Online services are displacing face to face services, with huge impacts on sectors such as retail, banking and education.
- Broadband services and digital tools are enabling new patterns of work such as telecommuting for individuals and new forms of relationships between businesses including offshore outsourcing.
- Global connectivity is enabling new and agile supply chains across all sectors of the economy.
- Digitisation of information and entertainment resources is fundamentally changing the market for many traditional products such as books, newspapers and music on physical media such as CDs.
- Online media is changing the way people find out about the places they want to visit, the experiences they want to have and the products they want to purchase.
- Smart technologies are creating new opportunities for energy saving through efficiencies in our buildings and our energy grids.
- People and businesses are becoming more demanding about how and when they interact with their governments, for both decision making and service delivery.

Digital technologies also offer opportunities for communities to thrive. They can provide:

- New solutions to old problems
- New ways of creating wealth
- New communication channels and greater accessibility.

Forward thinking and practical planning helps communities to deal with the transformations and disruptions that new technologies are enabling and to build on the opportunities that are available. The digital future is a key pillar in creating a vibrant community future.

“One third of the Australian economy faces imminent and substantial disruption by digital technologies and business models.”
- Deloitte Australia, 2012
**Digital technologies help communities to develop**

Digital technologies provide many opportunities for communities, such as those in the Peel, to develop. Explor Consulting highlights 12 areas where digital technologies can help achieve social, economic and environmental benefits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Connected Households</strong></th>
<th>Confident and capable people living in households with good broadband connections and digital services can have better access to services and are able to be more flexible in how, when and where they work.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Information</strong></td>
<td>Rich local information, delivered through interactive digital services, allows people to be more informed, supports greater community participation and helps to bring communities together.</td>
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<td><strong>Vibrant and Sustainable Living</strong></td>
<td>Technology enabled buildings and infrastructure can reduce environmental impacts through better management of energy consumption and through reductions in required travel.</td>
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<td><strong>Community Health and Wellbeing</strong></td>
<td>Online services in homes and community facilities can improve access to health and community care professionals. Online services and digital technologies can also enable many people with special needs to live independently.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community Education and Skills</strong></td>
<td>Access to education and training can be improved for students and learners of all ages through access to digital resources and online services in their homes, workplaces and other locations.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community Safety and Security</strong></td>
<td>Online services can provide better community access and sharing of information about local safety, security risks and critical incidents.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement of the Socially Excluded</strong></td>
<td>Online services can help socially excluded people to connect to other people, to access support services and to develop basic skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Democracy and Open Government</strong></td>
<td>Digital tools can be used by governments to extend the way they engage with their citizens, to support collaborative decision making and to improve transparency through access to rich sets of government information.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Online Government Services</strong></td>
<td>Carefully designed online services are integrated, efficient, timely and citizen centric.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Economic Sectors</strong></td>
<td>Digital tools and online services are critically important for larger businesses and are used to support customer interactions, supplier interactions and internal operations.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SME Sector</strong></td>
<td>For smaller businesses, digital tools and online services support customer interactions and other operations.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ICT Sector and Digital Workforce</strong></td>
<td>The presence of successful local ICT businesses provides employment opportunities for professional creative people and provides important technical support for other businesses and organisations.</td>
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The Peel is a strong, unique and diverse region

The Peel is a geographically diverse, rapidly growing region offering a great lifestyle, located about 75 km south of Perth. Although its area of 5,648 km² makes it physically the smallest region in Western Australia, the region now has a population of around 120,000 people, growing at over 4% per annum. The population is projected to reach 400,000 people by 2050.

Much of the region is devoted to agriculture and horticulture. There are also forests, plateau land, flood plains and extensive waterways and coastlines. There are many existing urban centres including the major City of Mandurah and there is urban growth in other localities.

Gold, copper and bauxite mining are important parts of the regional economy. Other significant economic sectors include construction, manufacturing, retail, tourism, agriculture, fishing and forestry.

The region’s city and shires

There are five local government areas:

**Boddington**: The inland Shire of Boddington, located in the south-east of Peel, is the largest shire in the region with an area of 1,900 km² and the shire with lowest population, currently just under 2,000 people. However, the shire is experiencing rapid development, largely due to the Newmont Boddington Gold Mine, which will be the largest gold mine in Australia. Boddington has also been nominated as one of Western Australia’s nine Super Towns which will see new infrastructure investment. The other key industries include bauxite mining, alumina production, agriculture and forestry. The shire also has many natural attractions.

**Mandurah**: The city is a thriving regional city and a favourite holiday destination. It has developed from a small fishing village to a bright, clean and modern city that is renowned for its lifestyle and its tourism experiences. The population is now approaching 70,000 people, living in an area of 173 km². Recent upgrades to rail and road links mean that travel times to Perth are now less than an hour. The City of Mandurah comprises approximately 65% of Peel’s population and 3% of its land area.

**Murray**: The Shire of Murray is in the centre of the Peel Region and is also experiencing very rapid population growth. It offers a country lifestyle in an attractive natural environment with good transport links and close proximity to city based services in Mandurah. There are over 16,000 people living in the shire, distributed over an area of 1,821 km², including the localities of Pinjarra, North Pinjarra, South Yunderup, North Yunderup, Coolup, Dwellingup, Furnissdale, Nambeelup, North Dandalup and Ravenswood.

**Serpentine-Jarrahdale**: The shire is Peel’s northern most and fastest growing area with around 20,000 people living in an area of 905 km². It is a largely rural area and much of the growth has been due to the opportunities of rural-based lifestyles within commuting distance of employment in Perth. The larger townships are along the main transport links to Perth, including Byford, Mundijong and Serpentine. The shire also contains important conservation and water catchment areas.

**Waroona**: The diverse shire in the south-west of Peel extends from the Indian Ocean to the Darling foothills and contains significant wetlands, coastal eco-systems, forests, agriculture, mining and heavy industry. The overall area is 835 km². The shire has a unique rural feels and is home to around 4,000 residents, living in small communities including the localities of Waroona, Preston Beach, Lake Clifton and Hamel.

Businesses and community representatives in the Serpentine Valley have taken a lead in creating www.serpentinevalley.com.au - a website promoting the area as a tourism destination. The website showcases the natural and historic attractions of the district and the many opportunities for outdoor recreation, eating, drinking and visiting local markets. It also provides an online directory of small businesses in the district. The website is great example of a Peel partnership. It was developed by a Boddington based small business, Templeman Twells Web Design, which has clients throughout the world.
**The region’s strengths**

The Peel has many strengths:

**Physical location and natural beauty:** The Peel is a place of beauty and diverse landscapes, coastlines, waterways and rich ecosystems. The major features are the Peel-Harvey Estuary and its feeder rivers, the Indian Ocean beaches and reefs, and significant areas of forest. There are many national parks.

**Lifestyle:** Peel offers a wonderful lifestyle for many of its residents, with natural beauty, relaxed rural settings and great recreation opportunities.

**Visitor destination:** The region’s beautiful natural setting, outdoor recreation opportunities and historic heritage make it a great destination for visitors.

**Land development prospects:** There will be major urban and industrial land developments, particularly in Serpentine-Jarrahdale and Murray. These developments are expected to help create many thousands of new jobs.

**Mining & processing industries:** The development of the mines and associated processing is a significant and growing contributor to the regional economy.

**Transport links:** There are excellent road and rail links to Perth. There are also good links to Bunbury and the South West.

**City of Mandurah:** The region includes Mandurah, WA’s second largest city. The city offers a range of commercial, government and community services for the region. It also attracts a significant amount of investment.

**Community infrastructure:** There is a good and developing array of community infrastructure in the form of health and education facilities.

**Community organisations:** The Peel has a number of active and successful community organisations including sporting organisations.

**Commitment to sustainability:** The region and its many communities are committed to a sustainable future and take a pro-active stance on climate change.

**Water resources:** There are significant water resources throughout many parts of the region.

**Community organisations:** The Peel has a number of active and successful community organisations including sporting organisations.

**Challenges facing the region**

The Peel also faces some challenges:

**Economic diversity and employment opportunities:** The Peel’s economic base is somewhat narrow and needs to be broadened, particularly given that the mines have finite lifespans. There are generally a limited range of employment opportunities, particularly for people with professional qualifications.

**Global trends:** Globalisation trends and the disruptive effects of digital technology are placing competitive pressures on certain businesses sectors such as retail and tourism.

**Capabilities of small businesses:** Many of the region’s small businesses are well established but lack management skills, innovative cultures and other capacities to thrive in a period of change, brought about by new economic realities and technological disruption.

**Access to education:** There is currently limited access to education in the Peel, particularly higher education. In some communities, there is limited access to secondary school education.

**Access to services:** Many communities in the Peel have limited access to retail, commercial, government and other services.

**Social disadvantage:** There are families and individuals throughout the region who are socially disadvantaged as explained in the report *Peel Away the Mask II*. Some communities have limited access to affordable and appropriate housing.

**Sustainable transport:** Transport within the Peel Region is very car dependent and only limited public transport is available.

**Opportunities for young people:** The region offers a limited range of education, social, cultural and employment opportunities for young people.

**Land development impacts:** There are risks that inappropriate land development will diminish the natural assets, eco-systems, rural character and lifestyle advantages of the region’s localities.
The Peel aspires to a great future

Peel’s local governments and communities have been working to identify their aspirations and preferred futures through strategic community plans and other plans. The councils and regional development organisations have worked collectively to identify the preferred futures for the whole region. RDA Peel has recently published Peel 2032, an overall strategic plan for the region. The aspirations include:

**Place and identity**: The population of the Peel will have grown, but the region and its different districts will have retained their own unique and highly regarded identities and lifestyles in beautiful locations. The region will be seen as being distinct from the Perth metropolitan area.

**Quality of life**: The Peel will be a great place to live for people of different age groups and backgrounds. There will be vibrant communities of different sizes ranging from a dynamic city and charming towns through to small hamlets and agricultural districts. The region will be recognised as a lifestyle destination.

**Economy and employment**: The Peel’s economic base will have broadened, its business productivity will have increased and the levels of innovation will have expanded. The region will have built on its advantages and strengths in agriculture, food processing, clean energy, tourism, mining, equine industries, construction and other sectors. The growth in available local employment will more than match the growth in population. There will be more sustainable employment, particularly for professionals, for creative people and for young people.

**Sustainability**: Lifestyles, industries and developments will be sustainable. A high value will be placed on preserving natural ecosystems, landscapes and waterways. Climate change and other environmental threats will be proactively managed.

**Access to services**: There will be greater access to government, commercial, retail and community services for the different communities of the Peel.

**Education**: There will be an increase in the levels of education attainment and qualifications and an expanded skill base in the Peel. There will be expanded access and more course options available throughout the whole region for all levels of education, including VET and university education.

**Health and well being**: The people of the Peel will lead healthy and active lives. People with special needs, including aged people and those with disabilities, will have good life quality. There will be good access to local health and related services.

**Social capital**: There will be a strong civil society with active community organisations throughout the Peel. The level of social isolation will be reduced.

**Housing**: There will be diverse housing options to enable healthy living by people with diverse backgrounds and needs. New housing developments will be sustainable and will encompass social, recreational and employment opportunities within a short distance.

**Infrastructure**: The Peel will have good infrastructure that meets community needs, supports environmental sustainability and is cost effective to maintain.

**Community safety**: The Peel will be a safe region to live, work and visit.

**Transport**: There will be good transport links and less dependency on private cars throughout the region.

**Governance**: The people of the Peel will be served by effective and responsive local governments and other government bodies, working collaboratively and co-operatively, and sharing appropriate services.

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Australia’s CSIRO regularly publishes Our future world, a survey of the global megatrends that are changing the way we live and work. The 2012 edition identifies 6 megatrends, including a megatrend about the impact of digital technology. CSIRO highlights the way that technology and broadband connections are changing the nature of employment with a rapid growth in domestic and international freelancing. The “portfolio worker” chooses where they wish to live and provides services to many organisations. Regions such as the Peel, with great lifestyles and good broadband connections, will see an influx of such workers.
Digital strategies and actions to build a great future

Explor Consulting has identified six strategies that the regional development organisations and local governments of the Peel should pursue to create its better future using digital technologies:

1. Lead and collaborate on digital technologies
2. Extend access to digital infrastructure
3. Celebrate and promote local communities
4. Build household capacity and confidence
5. Develop the small business sector’s capacity
6. Enhance access to local services.

Each of these strategies is important and each should be implemented through a series of projects and actions:
1. Lead and collaborate on digital technologies

The Peel has five local governments which serve different communities with different needs and each community will face its own journey towards its digital future. Individual communities and the region as a whole can achieve more if they collaborate and share appropriate resources. This will require region wide leadership.

The local governments and the regional development organisations should commit to a digital strategy and establish sound arrangements for leadership, collaboration and the management of agreed actions. They should promote the strategy and become good exemplars of modern digitally enabled organisations.

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<tr>
<th>Project/Action</th>
<th>Scope &amp; Approach</th>
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</table>
| **1.1 Commit to the strategy**        | The Peel’s individual local governments and the regional development organisations should collectively and individually agree to a clear digital futures strategy for the region and then provide active ongoing support for its promotion and implementation. This should include:  
  - Alignment of their individual strategies with the regional digital strategy  
  - Promotion to residents and other key community stakeholders  
  - Advocacy to potential partners and funders including state and federal governments  
  - Firm implementation management including clear accountabilities and effective project management. |
| **1.2 Allocate responsibility for leadership** | An appropriate regional body should be given responsibility for leading the governance, implementation, monitoring and regular revision of the digital strategy. Resources should be made available to facilitate and co-ordinate this work. |
| **1.3 Convene a regional forum**      | The region should convene a region wide digital forum which regularly brings together key stakeholders and local champions in implementing the digital futures strategy. The forum should assist in:  
  - Digital advocacy for the region  
  - Building networks and partnerships  
  - Identifying new opportunities  
  - Operational planning  
  - Monitoring implementation progress. |
<p>| <strong>1.4 Agree on an annual operational plan</strong> | An annual operational plan should be prepared setting out the agreed practical actions to be undertaken for implementing the digital strategy. The plan should also define relevant targets to be achieved. |
| <strong>1.5 Create a regional digital futures website</strong> | A website should be created to describe and promote the Peel’s vision of its digital future to its residents, visitors, potential investors, potential new business operators (including freelancers), and other stakeholders and funders. The website should be engaging and fun. |</p>
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<td>1.6 Build a regional shared services organisation</td>
<td>The local governments of the Peel have been considering the establishment of a shared services organisation, possibly based on the embryonic PIH (Peel Infrastructure Holdings) organisation. This should be actively and carefully pursued. The local governments should consider the establishment of an organisation which:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Is well governed and well managed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Has clear and transparent financial arrangements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Has clear service agreements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Focuses on efficiency through building a critical mass of skills and achieving a better utilisation of capital assets</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Uses a robust and integrated systems platform</td>
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<td>• Where feasible, distributes its activities and its staff in different towns, through the use of broadband services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Is established and developed through a careful, incremental implementation.</td>
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<td>1.7 Build councils’ digital capacities</td>
<td>Each local government should seek to become an exemplar of a modern digitally enabled organisation and should build its own internal digital capacities, sharing relevant approaches with other authorities. Local authorities should focus on their:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Capabilities for managing digital programs</td>
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<td>• Strategic plans, adopting “digital” as a planning pillar</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Planning schemes, with policies that are favourable to home based businesses</td>
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<td>• Online delivery of services, including an expansion and better integration of available online services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Use of online services for community consultations and policy formulation</td>
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<td>• Internal work practices, with opportunities to adopt digitally enabled improvements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Underpinning technology systems and infrastructure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.8 Promote smart infrastructure</td>
<td>Local governments should promote the use of smart infrastructure including smart electricity and water metering.</td>
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2. **Extend access to digital infrastructure**

Ubiquitous broadband access is the foundation for the Peel’s digital future. The NBN will provide ultra-speed fixed services to homes and other private premises. There should also be public outdoor spaces and shared indoor spaces where people who are working, learning or enjoying their leisure time can access broadband services through computers and mobile devices.

This strategy should extend Wi-Fi hot spots to many towns throughout the region. It should upgrade the access to digital technology in existing community facilities.

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| 2.1 Create Wi-Fi hotspots           | Wi-Fi hotspots should be introduced in key locations of towns throughout the region. The hotspots should be configured so as to support online activities including:  
  • Providing immediate and up to date information about the locality to visitors  
  • Delivering immediate and up to date local information for the community  
  • Widening access to online education resources by students of all ages  
  • Providing access to other important government, community and commercial online services  
  • Creating valuable mobile digital access for business employees and freelancers. |
| 2.2 Extend the digital infrastructure of community resource centres | The region’s community resource centres, libraries and similar community facilities should be given stronger roles in enabling all residents to have access to online services and digital resources. These stronger roles should be developed through measures including the provision of:  
  • Free W-Fi within each facility  
  • Mobile tablet devices for loan use within key facilities  
  • Access to a rich array of online resources, particularly educational resources.  
Effective technical support should be provided for the facilities. This could be provided by the regional shared services organisation (see 1.6). |
| 2.3 Extend access to video conferencing | The region should work with local governments and government funding bodies to provide better access to video conferencing and similar facilities in the Peel’s more isolated towns. These facilities should be able to support better access to services including:  
  • Education and training  
  • Health and related services  
  • Consultations with professional advisers  
  • Business meetings. |
3. **Celebrate and promote local communities**

The Peel’s communities should build on its greatest assets: its people, its location and its heritage. There are many benefits in creating and presenting a rich array of digital content and digital stories about the different communities to potential visitors, to potential investors and most importantly, to the people who live, work and learn in each district. Good digital content is informative and engaging.

A shared approach should be considered for introducing a powerful systems platform to host and present content and stories. Each community should drive the production of content about their locality and its local activities.

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<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a common platform for hosting and presenting digital content</td>
<td>The region should consider establishing a common region wide systems platform to host and present digital content about the Peel’s different communities, to be made available to residents, visitors and others. The platform should allow content to be presented in engaging ways for the different audiences. It should allow the content to be contributed by different groups including local businesses, community organisations, local governments and regional organisations. The platform should have an appropriate and sustainable business and management model. The platform could be managed as part of a regional shared services organisation (see 1.6). The regional platform could be implemented in conjunction with a platform being considered by the City of Mandurah.</td>
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| 3.2 Support the creation of a digital resources about local heritage | The region should support the creation by communities of rich sets of digital resources that provide interactive and engaging content about the local heritage, history and environment. The resources could be hosted on the common content platform (see 3.1). The region should broker partnerships and projects to create the resources. These should involve:  
  - Schools  
  - Indigenous communities  
  - Local museums  
  - Local community organisations. |
| 3.3 Commission the development of apps that support outdoor recreation activities | The region should commission the development of mobile device apps which encourage and enrich outdoor activities across the Peel by visitors and residents. Apps could be developed about many of the region’s walking trails. They could also be developed for increasingly popular activities such as geo-caching. |
| 3.4 Support community organisations going online | Assistance should be provided to community and sporting organisations to develop their online presences. Where relevant, organisations’ resources could be hosted on the common content platform (see 3.1). |
4. **Build household capacity and confidence**

Digital technologies offer new ways of living, working and learning and much of this occurs within peoples’ homes. There will need to be changes to homes so that people have the physical spaces they require and the technical infrastructure to support different ways of living. These changes should also support more sustainable living and more independent living.

There should be active campaigns to build understanding and confidence about digital living for the Peel’s households. There will be many significant housing developments built across the Peel in the years ahead and there should also be campaigns to encourage builders to construct new homes that are digital ready and sustainable.

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<tr>
<td>4.1 Support community organisations to help their local communities get online</td>
<td>Local community organisations and community resources centres should be equipped and supported to help their local communities get online, using a mixture of easy to understand publications, information sessions and one on one support. The campaigns should draw on volunteers, including younger people and older people. An initial step should be to prepare a set of region wide practical resources that can be used by the different community organisations.</td>
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| 4.2 Promote greater awareness in the building industry | A campaign should be launched to raise awareness about digital ready homes to firms that will be building new homes in the region. The objectives of the campaign should be to promote understanding about:  
  - How digital technologies, and other factors, are changing the way that people are living, working and learning in their homes  
  - How new technologies and infrastructures will need to be installed and accommodated within homes  
  - The implications of house design  
  - New business opportunities for the building and construction industry. |
5. **Develop the small business sector’s capacity**

The economic development of the Peel and the broadening of its employment base will require a small business sector that survives and thrives. This sector faces particular opportunities and particular threats from the adoption of digital technologies. However, many existing and emerging small businesses are yet to develop their capacity and confidence for incorporating technologies into their operations.

There should be practical programs to build capacity and confidence in the region’s small business sector. These programs should offer practical assistance from locally based, trusted and competent people. They should draw on the resources of relevant local organisations, including the Peel Small Business Centre.

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<tr>
<td>5.1 Organise awareness raising sessions for business</td>
<td>The region should co-ordinate a program of practical awareness raising sessions, targeted at small businesses that have a low understanding of how digital technologies will affect their business survival and growth. The sessions should mainly be provided by trusted business peers rather than external experts. Where feasible, local business organisations and networks should be involved in delivering the sessions.</td>
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<td>5.2 Establish an program of business and technology mentoring</td>
<td>The region should co-ordinate a program of business/technology mentoring for small businesses. The program should involve trusted mentors who can provide practical advice and coaching about moving online to small businesses. The regional activities could include: • Development of basic knowledge resources • Selection/accreditation of a small number of mentors • Promotion of the mentoring program • Seed funding, such as payment of the first hour of mentoring advice for eligible businesses.</td>
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<td>5.3 Establish online directories of local businesses</td>
<td>Online directories of businesses should be established for all localities in the Peel, so that every local business can have at least a basic online presence that can be discovered through search engines. Businesses should be provided with regular email reports about online searches and enquiries relating to their business. The online directories should also be linked to other local online resources including those promoting the heritage and tourism attractions of each area (see 3.2).</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.4 Establish a network of business incubators</td>
<td>Local governments and other organisations have established, or are establishing, separate small business incubators throughout the region. These incubators should be linked using broadband services, video conferencing, online communities and similar tools so that the capacities of the incubators are increased through better sharing of expert advice, knowledge, training and other resources.</td>
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<td>5.5 Highlight and celebrate digital innovation</td>
<td>The region should highlight and celebrate the digital innovations of individual businesses through means including regional awards.</td>
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<td>5.6 Attract new business by promoting the digital advantages of the region</td>
<td>The region should promote the digital advantages of the Peel to people who could relocate to the region and establish businesses. The people targeted should include potential investors, potential business operators, professionals and freelancers.</td>
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6 **Enhance access to local services**

Digital technologies provide new opportunities to improve access to services for smaller communities that are some distance from major population centres. In many cases, this will require new models of service delivery to be adopted by large government and commercial organisations that are managed from outside of the region. There are opportunities for improving access to key community services such as education and health. There are also opportunities to improve access to commercial services including retail services and financial services. As an example, supermarkets now offer online shopping with home delivery.

An important role for regional bodies is to advocate and facilitate the adoption of innovative service delivery methods that benefit smaller communities by the various service providers.

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| **6.1** Advocate and broker new linkages with education institutions | The region should advocate and broker better access to education in the region using digital technologies. This should include:  
  - Support for a new shared education facility in a major population centre such as Mandurah  
  - Broadening of course offerings in smaller schools by using broadband and other services to deliver some courses from schools to surrounding schools  
  - Encouraging VET and university providers to increase their online course offerings to the region. |
| **6.2** Actively engage in e-health initiatives | The Australian Government is piloting and implementing a number of initiatives, including e-health initiatives, to improve access to health services in regional areas. The region should actively engage in these initiatives. |
| **6.3** Promote safe use of online ride sharing services | Across the world there is a growing trend to use online service for sharing rides in private vehicles and a number of websites have been established (see page 2). These can be particularly beneficial in areas where it is not practical to offer comprehensive public transport services. The region should promote the safe use of online ride sharing services, particularly in the Peel’s smaller and more distant communities. |
| **6.4** Encourage innovative delivery of commercial services | The region and local governments should identify areas where there are major deficiencies in access to commercially provided services, and actively encourage the providers to adopt digitally enabled, innovative services which ensure better access for communities. |
| **6.5** Expand and integrate online services of local governments | As highlighted in 1.7, each local government should expand and integrate their online delivery of services. |
Making it happen

In charting a way forward to its digital future, the Peel must build on its opportunities and confront its particular challenges.

Opportunities to build on

The Peel already has some great opportunities on which to take action for building its digital future:

1. **NBN rollout**: The region has some of the first areas in Australia where the NBN is being rolled out.
2. **Regional collaboration**: The Peel’s five local governments and regional development organisations have a commitment and a set of basic organisational arrangements for collaboration and resource sharing.
3. **Great locations to live**: The Peel’s diverse urban and rural locations are wonderful places to live. The transport and telecommunication links into many localities make them ideal places to support telecommuting for people who work for Perth based organisations.
4. **Home based micro-businesses**: The Peel has a number of home based micro-businesses. There are opportunities for these businesses to expand their markets, to build their knowledge and to build networks with partner businesses through online services.
5. **Active community sector**: The Peel’s many communities are supported by a rich fabric of community organisations that make a vital contribution to community life and service delivery.
6. **Community resource centres**: The community resource centres are important local facilities that support access to key services, technology facilities, advice and training.
7. **Planned population growth**: There are plans for a number of major new developments across the region that will see many thousands of new houses and other facilities built in a number of local government areas.
8. **Natural and human heritage**: The Peel has a rich heritage of natural resources, ecosystems, walking trails, historical buildings, railways and stories from the past. These are important to the region’s residents and visitors.

Challenges to be confronted

The Peel also has some challenges that must be confronted in building its digital future:

1. **Limited understanding by small businesses**: Many of the region’s smaller businesses are yet to develop their understanding of how to fully exploit the opportunities, and to respond to the threats, that digital technologies bring. Many businesses also lack the practical capacity to embrace online services.
2. **Limited range of ICT service providers**: The Peel currently has a limited range of businesses that provide information technology services.
3. **Local governments at an early stage of e-service capacity**: The region’s local governments are generally at an early stage with their own e-service capacities.
4. **Limitations of ICT infrastructure in community resources centres**: Most of the region’s community resource centres and similar facilities currently have limited ICT equipment, networks and technical support.
5. **Diversity of local governments**: The region’s five different local governments have different local priorities and capacities.

Setting out on the journey

This plan has set out a vision for the Peel’s future, enhanced by broadband and digital technologies. It has also proposed strategies for achieving that future.

The first stage in implementing this plan is for the Peel’s individual local governments and the regional development organisations to address the proposed actions in the first of the 6 strategies: **Lead and collaborate on digital technologies**. In particular, there must be a clear commitment to the strategy and clearly defined leadership responsibility.

There should be early work to **Convene a regional forum** [action 1.3], to **Agree on an annual operational plan** [action 1.4] and to **Create a regional digital futures website** [action 1.5].

When these foundations are in place, work should commence on two critical areas that will require...
careful consideration, planning and a significant period of implementation: Build a **regional shared services organisation** [action 1.5] and Build councils’ **digital capacities** [action 1.6].

Many of the proposed actions in the remaining five strategies will require funding from outside of the region. There are a number of relevant funding programs managed by the Western Australian Government, including digital economy programs of the Department of Commerce. ScreenWest also funds digital content creation projects. The Australian Government funds many programs related to the NBN and regional development through the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport. Other Australian Government departments also provide funding to encourage the update of digital services to improve service delivery.

The Peel will be a prosperous, sustainable and socially inclusive region, made up of many distinct communities, where people and businesses confidently use digital technology to enrich the way they live, work, learn, create and connect.