

Australian Internet governance community moving forward

NetThing 2019 at a glance

When	28 October 2019
Where	University of Technology, Sydney
How much	Free
No. of participants	Around 170 attendees with some people dropping in and out during the day. Participants came from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Academia■ Technical community■ Government■ Civil society and NGO groups■ Business/industry■ Interested members of the general public
Sessions held	8 substantive sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 5 panels■ 3 workshops■ 1 special session on cyber norms
Main topics discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Data protection and personal privacy■ Harmful content online■ Security■ Digital inclusion■ How the Australian government develops Internet policy■ The future of NetThing
Website	https://netthing.org.au
Twitter hashtag	#netthing
Webcast archives	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyHOYhQSMCnTpQa8428R5-A
Live blog archive	http://nissaba.net/live-reports/netthing-live

NetThing 2019 summary report

Why NetThing?

With the increasing importance of the Internet to every facet of today's world, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was established by United Nations Member States back in 2005. The first global was held in 2006 in Athens, Greece and has been held annually ever since.

Soon after the first IGF was held, national versions of the IGF began springing up all over the world, aimed at addressing more localized Internet concerns.

Australia first held its own version, the Australian IGF (auIGF), in 2012. auDA was the administrative home for the auIGF, but following a change of strategic direction for auDA, the last auIGF it hosted was in 2016. In May 2017, at a meeting of Internet stakeholders with Australia's newly appointed Ambassador for Cyber Affairs, Dr Tobias Feakin, there was consensus to continue a national forum for discussing Internet issues of key importance to Australians. Later that year, the government's Australian Cyber Strategy included a commitment to "support an annual community-led Australian Internet governance and cooperation forum". In 2018, a multistakeholder steering committee began meeting to turn that vision into reality. The result: NetThing.

Where did the name "NetThing" come from?

During the Australian Internet Community Forum in July 2018, many participants expressed the opinion that "Internet governance" sounded too esoteric and would not attract the vast array of Australian stakeholders that have an interest in Internet-related discussions. After many discussions amongst the steering committee, "NetThing" was suggested as a placeholder name, in homage to New Zealand's own NetHui. When no better alternative could be found, the name stuck!

Highlights of discussions during NetThing 2019

The full program for NetThing 2019 is available at:

<https://netthing.org.au/program>

The highlights below are grouped by theme rather than by session.

Data protection and personal privacy

- It was noted that there is a need to distinguish between the fundamental human right to privacy and mechanisms required to manage data produced about and by people.
- A speaker observed that privacy is a niche issue for most Australians, meaning that it's not a high priority for politicians
- either, as it isn't an issue likely to win - or lose - them votes at the ballot box.
- Another added how willing people are to accept terms and conditions for websites and applications without reading them, noting there is a kind of cyber snobbery demonstrated by many privacy advocates who despair at the willingness of most people to trade use of their data by

companies for quick and free access to online services.

- There was discussion about the difficulties involved in developing the required capacity in civil society to be able to function as effective advocates for issues such as data protection for Australian citizens.

Harmful content and behaviour online

- Abusive behaviour online begins in the real world. Toxic political climates in today's world spill over into the virtual world.
- There are no easy solutions to harmful online content and behaviour. For example, delaying streaming live video for 10 seconds may allow active shooter streams to be detected and pulled before they go public, but they would also prevent virtual family get-togethers having realtime conversations.
- The Australian government is considering how to tackle online trolling and abuse in broader contexts than just abuse directed at children.

Digital security

- There was discussion about government regulation to mandate backdoors into existing applications for national security purposes, with one speaker explaining that such backdoors have the effect of weakening digital security in general.
- It was noted that in the international context, there are two main areas of concern, and that Australia's position swings between them both:
 - National security and control
 - Integrity of networks and individual users

- It was also noted that erring too much on the side of caution and limiting data collection and differentiation can have the unintended consequence of further marginalizing the already marginalized as they become invisible through lack of data that identify their needs. Systems are then designed for the dominant group, without that ever being the intention.

- There were different views on how tech companies are responding to harmful content and behaviour online. Some speakers believed tech companies were aware of their responsibilities and were doing their best to be proactive in addressing problems; others felt tech companies needed to take more responsibility.
- One speaker noted that in today's world, the Internet is a workplace for many people, and yet employers are doing very little to protect their workers from the sorts of harm they wouldn't think twice about trying to prevent in the real world: misogyny, racism and discrimination.

- One speaker emphasized the need for government to consider more than just national security when developing cybersecurity policy: technologists and other stakeholders need to be involved to develop robust cybersecurity for the country.
- The Department of Home Affairs Cybersecurity Strategy Call for Views was discussed:

<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-publications/submissions-and-discussion-papers/cyber-security-strategy-2020>

Digital inclusion

- Promoting the importance of access for people with disabilities via apps is vital; although website accessibility is widely expected, but there is no similar effort to ensure apps on mobile devices are equally accessible.
- A speaker stated that being online is no longer a choice for people as it now affects pretty much all aspects of life: to be excluded from the digital world is to be excluded from the physical world too.
- Another speaker highlighted the importance of international policy instruments in encouraging national and more localized adoption of accessibility standards and practices.
- People with disabilities are creators as well as consumers, but can find it difficult to find employment in the digital sector, even with discrimination legislation in place.
- The most recent version of The Australian Digital Inclusion Index was highlighted:
<http://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/the-index-report/report>

Multistakeholder participation in Internet policy development

A major theme in sessions throughout the day was recognition by participants of the importance of being able to come together and exchange views and experiences on a wide range of Internet-related issues. A selection of key ideas from the discussions:

- There was recognition of the need for better engagement on policy issues between government and non-government stakeholders in Australia.
- There was a better understanding established among non-government participants that politicians and the public sector, while both seen as “government”, can operate very differently when it comes to policy making, with the public sector seeking evidence on which to base policy-making, while politicians are seeking to keep their electorates happy.
- Some non-government participants expressed frustration with a perceived lack of government interest in engaging with other stakeholders in Internet matters. Non-government participants, however, also recognized that government has an important role in providing strong leadership in many Internet-related areas, particularly in the issues discussed in the digital inclusion and security sessions.
- There was also some discussion about multistakeholderism not working in all contexts. For example, it was pointed out that the Christchurch Call couldn't have happened in a multistakeholder context – at least as we know multistakeholderism today.
- One speaker observed that Australia had a much more diverse ecosystem of Internet-related actors a decade ago, including a range of industry representative bodies, but that as Australia's Internet market has consolidated, the remaining big players have found they can get direct access to decision-makers in government, meaning many industry bodies became redundant and disappeared.

Internet policy complexities

Another major theme of the day was the complexity of developing effective Internet policy development and regulation:

- It was noted that although many people wanted quick and easy solutions to Internet issues, there aren't any. This observation fed back into the importance of multistakeholder participation in Internet policy-making, as it helps to ensure as many aspects to an issue are raised and evaluated before any action is taken.
- One speaker noted that rather than being reactive to new technologies and using regulatory frameworks from previous centuries to regulate the Internet, it is important to be proactive future-based approach to policy and regulation for technologies.
- Another speaker observed that social welfare organizations often don't view their area of responsibility as having a digital policy component, but that recent cases in Australia, such as robo-debt calls, demonstrate that Internet and digital related policies now affect a far broader range of stakeholders than just purely Internet-focussed entities.
- There is a risk of real-world issues which are being presented as Internet issues on the global stage not having good outcomes because they are being discussed in inappropriate frameworks and forums. For example, many Internet of Things discussions are actually about global trade.
- Some "hot-button" policy issues on the Australian government's agenda:
 - Spectrum management
 - Cyberspace treaties
 - Data monetization/surveillance capitalism

The future of NetThing

Participants on the day expressed a willingness to engage in NetThing in the future. Some feedback on how to improve future NetThing events from participants:

- Some participants expressed a desire for longer, more in-depth sessions. Others, however, suggested that NetThing should stay high level, and spin off more detailed, targeted discussions – either via Netthing, or taken up by interested parties separately intersessionally.
- There was a request for sessions to be longer. The sessions at this first NetThing were only an hour long, which didn't allow enough time for detailed discussion.
- Several participants noted the need for greater diversity amongst panelists and participants in future, especially in terms of cultural diversity and encouraging more participation from the private sector.
- One participant suggested it would be great if NetThing could help support Australians to engage in the global Internet Governance Forum.
- Another participant suggested it would be great to bring in actual implementers (ISPs, government representatives, tech companies) to NetThing to talk about best practices and solutions being developed to Internet-related problems.
- A participant felt that bottom-up, grassroots community stories were missing from the meeting.

- Maybe introduce a Day Zero to NetThing. Or a “Day After”, to continue and develop the discussions of the day.
- NetThing sessions need to be more open to newcomers who don't necessarily

understand the terms and acronyms that are so frequently used.

Launched during NetThing

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) kicked off its consultation process, informally, for Australian stakeholder input what it should be proposing as best practices for implementing the cyber norms recommended by the 2015 report of the United Nations (UN) Group of Governmental Experts. The Australian government plans to use the input received from the consultation process to inform its input to the UN Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) currently underway in New York. In the leadup to NetThing 2019, participants were sent a copy of Australia’s submission to the OEWG in September:

- Cyber norms primer: How Australia implements the UN GGE-Norms
https://netthing.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Cyber_norms_primer_How-Australia-implements-the-UN-GGE-Norms.pdf

Full details of the public consultation:

- Public consultation: Responsible state behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security at the United Nations
<https://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/cyber-affairs/Pages/public-consultation-responsible-state-behaviour-in-cyberspace-in-the-context-of-international-security-at-the-united-nation.aspx>

Co-located activities

As has become increasingly common practice with the global Internet Governance Forum, some Internet-related organizations also took advantage of the broad spectrum of Internet governance stakeholders present at NetThing to hold side events:

- Internet Australia held its Annual General Meeting
- auDA held a membership gathering

Post-NetThing 2019 activities

Following discussion of the Department of Home Affairs’ Cybersecurity Strategy Call for Views in the Security session, participants in the security session prepared a joint submission to the Department of Home Affairs:

<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/cyber-strategy-2020/submission-198.pdf>

In addition, several of the panel sessions prompted new networks of interested parties to form around the issues discussed. For example, participants in the inclusion session agreed to work together on ways to improve inclusion for disadvantaged people in TAFE courses relating to IT and communications.

Appendix A: Resources related to discussions at NetThing 2019

Key events and processes referred to on the day

Internet Governance Forum

<https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual>

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/open-ended-working-group>

Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/group-of-governmental-experts>

Public consultation: Responsible state behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security at the United Nations

<https://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/cyber-affairs/Pages/public-consultation-responsible-state-behaviour-in-cyberspace-in-the-context-of-international-security-at-the-united-nation.aspx>

Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security

World Summit on the Information Society
<https://www.itu.int/net/wsis>

Key documents referred to on the day

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index

<http://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/the-index-report/report>

Digital platforms inquiry - final report

<https://www.accc.gov.au/publications/digital-platforms-inquiry-final-report>

Cyber norms primer: How Australia implements the UN GGE-Norms

https://netthing.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Cyber_norms_primer_How-Australia-implements-the-UN-GGE-Norms.pdf

World Summit on the Information Society: Tunis Agenda for the Information Society

<https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1.html>

Reports and blog posts about the day

Event recap: NetThing 2019

<https://afiliis.com.au/newsroom/blog-posts/event-recap-netthing-2019>

[hat_to_make_of_the_inaugural_netthing_2019](#)

What to Make of the Inaugural NetThing 2019

http://www.circleid.com/posts/20191202_w

NetThing: Reinvigorating a community in Australia

<https://blog.apnic.net/2019/11/21/netthing-reinvigorating-a-community-in-australia>

Appendix B: How NetThing was developed

Timeline

11-12 Oct 2012	<p>First au-IGF, Melbourne.</p> <p>auDA facilitates first Australian Internet Governance Forum, supported by ACCAN, APNIC, ISOC-AU and the IIA and corporate sponsors including Google, Facebook, Maddocks and AusRegistry.</p>
11-12 Oct 2016	<p>Final au-IGF, Melbourne.</p> <p>auDA discontinues its stewardship role of au-IGF.</p>
10 May 2017	<p>Stakeholder discussion on Internet governance with the Ambassador for Cyber Affairs, Canberra.</p> <p>Consensus amongst participants to re-establish a national Australian Internet governance event.</p>
Nov 2017	<p>Australian Cyber Strategy launched, Sydney.</p> <p>The strategy included a commitment for the Australian government to “support an annual community-led Australian Internet governance and cooperation forum”.</p>
Dec 2017	<p>Steering Committee 1.0 created.</p> <p>Department of Foreign Affairs provides seed funding for an independent secretariat (provided by Australian Continuous Improvement Group) and the chair of a steering committee to kickstart a new Australian IGF initiative.</p>
19 Jul 2018	<p>Steering Committee 1.0 created.</p> <p>Consists of representatives from Internet Australia, EFA, DFAT, DoCA, APNIC, ACCAN and auDA.</p>
19 Jul 2018	<p>Australian Internet Community Forum, Canberra.</p> <p>55 stakeholders nominated from civil society, technical community, government and private sector to participate. Consensus among stakeholders to create a multistakeholder event on Internet policy and governance issues of relevance to Australians.</p>
Jul 2018	<p>Steering Committee 2.0 created.</p> <p>Committee consists of original representatives, plus a number of new community volunteers who join after the Australian Internet Community Forum. A number of additional volunteers continue to join the committee right up until the NetThing event in October 2019. Due to completion of seed funding, Secretariat functions are transferred to Australian Department of Communications and the Arts.</p>
28 Oct 2019	<p>NetThing, Sydney.</p> <p>Around 170 participants and speakers attend.</p>

Committee members

Steering Committee 1.0 (Foundational year)

Chair: Sandra Davey

Secretariat: Michelle Scott Tucker, ACIG

Steering Committee 1.0 held six teleconferences between April and July 2018. The position of Steering Committee Chair and Independent Secretariat were funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

ACCAN	Narelle Clark
APNIC	Pablo Hinojosa Craig Ng Paul Wilson
auDA	Cameron Boardman Alister Paterson Liz Williams
Department of Communications and the Arts	Annaliese Williams
Department of Foreign Affairs	Luke Andrews Liam Nevill
Electronic Frontiers Australia	Lyndsey Jackson Peter Tonoli
Internet Australia	Keith Besgrove Paul Brooks Sae Ra Germaine Cheryl Langdon-Orr

Minutes of the Steering Committee 1.0's teleconferences are available at:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20190315024047/https://acig.com.au/governance-secretariat/australian-internet-community-planning-way-forward/>

Steering Committee 2.0

Chair: Sandra Davey

Vice Chair: Andrew Maurer

Secretariat: Department of Communications and the Arts

Committee Members:

Melody Bendindang, APNIC
Keith Besgrove, Internet Australia

Paul Brooks, Internet Australia
Hannah Brown, DoCA

Parris Burtenshaw, DoCA
Samantha Dickinson, Lingua Synaptica
Geoffrey Gerrand, Telstra
Adam Gosling
Caroline Greenway
Pablo Hinojosa, APNIC
Alison Howe, ASPI
Lyndsey Jackson, Electronic Frontiers
Australia (Coordinator)
Sarah Kirkby, Product Space
Cheryl Langdon-Orr, Internet Australia
Lucie Krahulcova, Access Now
Bronwyn Mercer, Youth @IGF Fellow 2017

Adam Mulcahy, CISCO
Kelsie Nabban
Alister Paterson, auDA
Helena Qian, UoN
Sandra Raub
Pradip Thomas, University of Queensland
Peter Tonoli, Electronic Frontiers Australia &
Internet Australia
Willem van Ketwich, ThoughtWorks
Kat Vrkic, auDA
Annaliese Williams, DoCA
Paul Wilson, APNIC

Mailing List Observers:

Craig Ng, APNIC
Stephen Edgar
Dr Suelette Dreyfus, Melbourne School of
Engineering

Liz Williams
Liam Nevill, DFAT
Kathy Reid, Linux Australia
Lisa Middlebrook, Macquarie University

Finance Sub-Committee Members:

Sandra Davey
Cheryl Langdon-Orr

The position of Steering Committee Chair and Secretariat were unfunded under Steering Committee 2.0. In the last month before the NetThing event, a portion of sponsorship funds for the event were used to pay Committee Member, Lyndsey Jackson, as a part-time coordinator for the event.

Steering Committee 2.0 held teleconferences every four weeks, increasing in frequency to every three weeks in the months leading up to the october 2019 event.

Program development

A draft program for NetThing was developed by the Steering Committee. Members of the Steering Committee volunteered to lead development of individual sessions and find speakers and moderators.

Documentation archives

- NetThing pitch deck
<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1UMpsOStNiuZ58Ed-P7Wol-QktiXVuhC9KQG9JX6LKyQ/edit?usp=sharing>
- NetThing description and prospectus
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1R9wcWdXdGq11g7lmeorRlewtGkr9c_tTSdp4cJEV3dl/edit?usp=sharing
- Steering Committee mailing list archive
<http://lists.internet.org.au/mailman/listinfo/netthing-steering>

Funding and expenses

Income (all amounts are in AUD and include GST *unless stated otherwise)

Sponsorship was provided from the following entities at the Amounts detailed below:

AARNet, Australia — \$3,000.00

Invoice# 2019NT012 - PAID

ACCAN, Australia — \$1,000.00

Invoice# 2019NT002 - PAID

Afilias Australia — \$2,000.00

Invoice# 2019NT007 - PAID

Amazon Commercial Service, Sydney — \$10,000.00

Invoice# 2019NT005 - PAID

APNIC, Brisbane — \$4,808.10

Donation — PAID Direct to Venue for Costs

auDA, Australia — \$10,000.00

Invoice# 2019NT008 - PAID

Communications Alliance, Australia — \$3,000.00

Invoice# 2019NT006 - PAID

Digi, Australia — \$5,000.00

Invoice# 2019NT011 - PAID

Enex TestLab, Victoria — \$2000.00

Invoice# 2019NT003 - PAID

ICANN, APAC — \$3,370.27*as deposited with USD=>AUD day exchange rate No GST

Invoice# 2019NT004 - PAID

ISOC, APAC — \$3,000.00* No GST

Invoice# 2019NT001 - PAID

Linux Australia — \$3,000.00

Invoice# 2019NT013 - PAID

Maddocks, Victoria — \$2,000.00

Invoice# 2019NT010 - PENDING

Neustar Australia — \$2,000.00

Invoice# 2019NT009 - PAID

Donations via Humantix Online Registration

Communications Alliance, Australia — \$1,000.00

Online Donation via Humantix - PAID

Various Registrations via Humantix, Australia — \$885.00

Online Donation via Humantix - PAID

SPONSORSHIP

\$50,370.00 in funds was received in the form of Sponsorship.

Expenditure at projects end at end December 2019 was **\$43,205.46**

Provision for GST on Funds received (\$48,370.00) is **\$4,397.27**

Assuming **\$2,056.36** of GST Credits, a balance (rounded up) of **\$2341.00** should be retained and earmarked. Leaving a project end balance as **carryover amount of \$10,410.00* than(rounded up) at EOM Dec 2019.**

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

\$9370.00 of the funds received from Sponsors were for the specific use to offer Fellowships that supported attendance at NetThing 2019. These funds allowed NetThing to offer all the support requested by all 9 of the Expressions of Interest received. This financial support was provided for itemised costs of transport and/or local accommodation near the venue as well as a small per diem.

The graph below in 'Expenditure' shows the purposed distribution of these funds and the small overspend of \$20.20 was covered by online donations received..

DONATIONS

Online Donation online via Humantix **\$1885.00**

Expenditure (all amounts are in AUD and include GST *unless stated otherwise)

Sponsorship and Donations have been distributed in the following way.

Fellowship Funds for 9 Fellows for Travel, Accommodation and Per Diem as required:



Other sponsorship funds received allowed us to cover venue and catering costs for the over 170 persons in attendance, provide for the professional event organisation services provided by Lyndsey from WeConnect, as well the various support and materials that allowed for the workshop and panels to work as they did, and most importantly ensure that the whole event had as complete a set of AV and interview of participant archives as foundation for future NetThing efforts.

These funds also allowed us to give various levels of support to ensure that another 9 people who were Presenters, Speakers and Panellists were able to attend. This support ranged from full airfare and accommodation support though to some reimbursed parking fees and bus fares, and of course to provide the astonishingly informative, evocative and engaging 'Welcome to Country' prepared for us by Michael West of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Lands Council.

Disbursement of Sponsorship Funds Received NetThing 2019



Chart of NetThing Accounts

Expenses Breakdown for NetThing 2019 - Chart of Accounts and YTD \$AUD		
Account Details (code)	YTD \$	Notes
Events (423)		
Cost of Event from Special or Professional Services (423EventSP)	\$430.00	
General Expense or Cost of Event (423EventGe)	\$263.86	
MSG Organising Committee Per Diem (423NT-MSGP)	\$427.20	
NetThing MSG Organising Committee travel and accommodation (423NT-MSGT)	\$2,233.42	
NetThing - Organising and Professional Services (423NT-OPS)	\$13,309.09	
NetThing Archive, Video and Publication materials (423NT-AVP)	\$3,014.93	
NetThing Event Catering costs (423NT-Cat)	\$7,090.91	
NetThing Fellowship recipient Per Diems paid (423NT-FPD)	\$750.00	
NetThing Fellowship Travel and Accommodation costs (423NT-FT)	\$7,504.06	
NetThing MSG Organising Committee Event expense claims (423NT-MSGE)	\$649.10	
NetThing Speaker, Panellist or Facilitator Per Diem (423NT-SPD)	\$644.52	
NetThing Speakers Travel and Accommodation (423NT-ST)	\$2,080.27	
NetThing Venue costs (423NT-Ven)	\$4,808.10	Paid Directly to Venue by APNIC
Expenses	\$43,205.46	

Separate Special Purpose Projects Account NetThing 2019 Project Closing Balance

BSB: 633 000

Account Number: 167 607 183

Available balance: **\$12,750.63**

Balance at 31 Dec 2019: **\$12,750**