

Smart Learning Cities Forum Background Briefing

Introduction

The exact definition of what a smart city is does vary. However, Wyndham City Council's Smart City Strategy (2019-2024 p. 34) defines a smart city as "a city that applies digital technology, data and innovative thinking to improve liveability, sustainability and productivity".

Wyndham's *Smart City Strategy 2019-2024*, winner of the prestigious Smart Cities Council Australia New Zealand 2019 Smart City Strategy award, forms a key pillar of Council's vision for Wyndham to become a connected digital city and defines how the city can use emerging technology and innovation to shape how its citizens, visitors and businesses work, play and live in the future city of Wyndham.

According to TechTarget Network (2019) the main mission of a smart city is to "optimize city functions" and drive economic growth. This should also improve the quality of life for citizens and provide better data analysis. The key point is that value is given to **what a city chooses to do with technology** rather than **how much technology** a city may have [emphasis added].

For this seminar we also need to consider a definition of a learning city. The local councils taking part in this seminar are members of UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC). Indeed, the City of Melton was the first Australian city to become a member of this network, while Wyndham City Council became a member of the GNLC in 2019. UNESCO defines a learning city as:

A learning city promotes lifelong learning for all. UNESCO defines a learning city as a city that:

- *effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education;*
- *revitalizes learning in families and communities;*
- *facilitates learning for and in the workplace;*
- *extends the use of modern learning technologies;*
- *enhances quality and excellence in learning; and*
- *fosters a culture of learning throughout life.*

In doing so, the city enhances individual empowerment and social inclusion, economic development and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2020).

The Australian Learning Community Network (ALCN), inclusive of rural, remote and regional areas of Australia, provides a definition of a learning community as one *that addresses its own learning needs through partnership. It uses the strengths of individual, social and institutional relationships across sectors to bring about cultural shifts in the perceptions of the value of learning. Learning communities explicitly use learning to enhance social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions on a sustainable, inclusive basis.*

Borkowska and Osborne (2018, p. 355) argue that smart city frameworks should consider civil society. Urban (as well as rural, remote and regional) change that includes the desire to become more technologically innovative, would be better placed, especially in regards to active citizenship, learning opportunities for all and social inclusion if it were underpinned by the broader ideas and

frameworks of learning cities. This presents a fantastic opportunity for lifelong learning principles to be integrated into smart city models for learning communities, learning cities and learning regions. It also aligns with the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular, Goal 4 Quality Education and Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities.

Recognised nationally and internationally as a leader in the learning community landscape, Melton City Council has a history of firsts. It was the first local government in Australia to formally adopt a Community Learning Plan in 1998, the first to establish a joint Council and community group to guide the development of lifelong learning, the first to implement a governance body, the first City in Australia to become a Learning City member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and to receive a prestigious Learning City Award.

We are all aware of the fact that digital technologies have changed the way people can learn, along with where and when learning takes place. Melton is proud to be a joint theme leader for the Equity & Inclusion theme as part of GNLC's new strategy. Our city will lead the topic of digital inclusion for all members of the community. This topic is a strong focus of our new learning strategy and will ensure our citizens have access to various programs to improve digital competencies.

To be both a Smart City and a Learning City you need to be able to engage with all groups, including those who are traditionally digitally excluded. Melton's programs focus on digital inclusion and empowerment and any tools we develop will be shared with our cluster to enable a broader impact.

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