

World-first report: Research reveals inclusive design can expand customer reach fourfold

Research commissioned by Centre for Inclusive Design, Adobe and Microsoft shows applying inclusive design adds financial, economic and social benefits for Australian organisations

Sydney, Australia – 21 May 2019 – New research launched today by the [Centre for Inclusive Design](#) in partnership with [Adobe](#) (NASDAQ: ADBE) and [Microsoft](#) (NASDAQ: MSFT) has revealed that products and services designed with the needs of people experiencing poverty, disability or the effects of aging in mind can reach four times the number of intended consumers and impact the bottom-line of organisations.

To highlight the importance of inclusive design, the Centre for Inclusive Design partnered with Adobe and Microsoft to commission ‘[The Benefit of Designing for Everyone](#)’ report, which was conducted by PwC. According to the report, people who experience difficulty accessing or using products and services are often not included in the design process. This can result in disregarding a significant percentage of the Australian population as well as costly retrofits for products and services, which can reach up to 10,000 times the cost of introducing inclusive design earlier on.

Findings from the report showed that the Australian education, retail and financial services sectors can benefit from implementing an inclusive approach in the design process. Within education, inclusive design can translate into an additional 228,000 tertiary qualifications earned in Australia which in turn can increase employment and salaries by \$4.5 billion annually. Inclusively designed financial services can help more than 830,000 Australians experience improved financial capacity and capability, while in the retail sector there is a \$4 billion potential increase to revenue from better designed products and services.

Five million Australians across the country are unable to access products and services because of poor design, yet they possess over \$40 billion in annual disposable income. This number includes people living with a disability and seniors, however there are millions of Australians who are also vulnerable to exclusion due to location, gender, ethnicity or financial status.

Global technology and digital experience leaders, Adobe and Microsoft are innovators in the inclusive design space and two of the first organisations worldwide to recognise the importance of understanding the needs, wants and limitations of customers as part of the design process. Both companies have inclusive design roles within their teams, who are in charge of driving transformation and rethinking products.

Dr Manisha Amin, CEO of Centre for Inclusive Design, said, “Design that considers the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age and other forms of human difference means more people are included. We commissioned the research to identify and determine the necessary means by which Australia can act to reduce these gaps. Inclusively designed products and services that have edge users in mind, can reach and benefit up to four times the size of the intended audience and enable organisations to increase their revenue by growing the size of their target markets. Designers, companies, and government all have a role to play, by designing, investing and legislating with difference in mind, so that a design process that is inclusive becomes standard practice.”

Jeremy Thorpe, Partner and Chief Economist, PwC, said, “Inclusive design is a no-regrets process that creates significant benefits which are currently being left on the table. It is an overlooked step in maximising the potential of Australian business and ensuring a more productive Australia.”

Suzanne Steele, Managing Director, Adobe Australia and New Zealand, said, “Inspiration can come from anywhere and anyone, and it’s up to Australian businesses to give employees accessible tools that can enhance the creation process to bring their ideas to life. Through our partnership with the Centre for Inclusive Design and Microsoft, we want to raise awareness of the importance for organisations to include a diverse range of voices and perspectives within their teams in order to reflect the diversity of the Australian population in their products and services.”

David Masters, Corporate Affairs Director, Microsoft Australia, said, “Accessibility is often focused on compliance, and while that is incredibly important, this report clearly shows that inclusion drives economic benefit too. Embedding inclusion in the upfront design phase ensures organisations are delivering products and services for everyone. Inclusive design is driving innovation at Microsoft and is a concept that all organisations should be embracing.”

The report analyses three key industries in Australia – education, retail and financial services – that can benefit from implementing inclusive design and drive financial, economic and social improvements. Among these benefits, businesses have the opportunity to increase their revenue by growing their target markets and include Australians vulnerable to exclusion, who possess over \$40 billion in annual disposable income.

Education

Only 17 per cent of Australians living with disability will complete a bachelor level qualification or above, compared to 30 per cent without a disability. The research showed that placing inclusive design at the forefront of higher education would lead to an improved student experience, as well as attracting more students from local and global regions, which could result in an additional 228,000 tertiary qualifications being earned. This increase would translate directly to the Australian economy, which would receive a further \$4.5 billion through salary earnings.

Inclusive design in tertiary education has already enabled students to complete online courses, studying whenever and wherever best fits with their lives. According to the report, this emphasis on diversity should be extended to the way in which higher education is taught and accessed, especially among excluded population groups.

Retail

Within the retail products sector, up to 20 per cent of Australians are unable to access and use goods appropriately. More inclusively designed retail products would promote accessibility and improve the user experience for all Australians. For example, the ‘household goods’ and ‘clothing, footwear and personal accessory’ categories, which comprise products used by most of the population, would be greatly impacted through inclusive design. This impact would see a \$4 billion increase in revenue for these retail categories.

Applying this approach across multiple retail products would equate to considerable financial benefits in an untapped market for many retail businesses.

According to the report, a variety of retail products that were originally designed with edge users in mind are now used by a wide majority of consumers. Electric toothbrushes were created for patients with limited motor skills but have also become popular with consumers who don't have this issue.

Last year, Coles introduced an autism spectrum-friendly low-sensory "Quiet Hour" experience in 173 of its stores. The initiative has not only impacted shoppers with autism, but also shoppers who want peace and quiet while they shop.

Financial Services

Almost 17 per cent of Australians are currently financially excluded, which is significantly higher than comparable developed nations such as the UK, Germany or France. This percentage includes people living with disability as well as underprivileged groups.

Financial inclusion improves financial capacity, capability and independence, allowing individuals to participate more in social and economic activities and create better outcomes for their communities. Reducing financial exclusion through inclusive design by even 25 per cent, would result in 832,000 additional Australians being financially included. The financial services industry would also benefit significantly, receiving \$1.5 billion in additional revenue from annual fees.

For inclusive design to be successful, it should be implemented at the beginning of the design process. Design that is not inclusive can lead to complaints and negatively impact brand reputation. Other consequences may include legal challenges, planning delays and costly retrofits as a product or service matures. The relative cost of retrofitting a product or service to become inclusive will increase significantly over time and can reach up to 10,000 times the cost of introducing inclusive design earlier on.

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About Centre for Inclusive Design

Centre for Inclusive Design is a social enterprise that helps government, educators, business and community organisations design and deliver products, services and experiences that are accessible and usable by as many people as possible. As Australia's inclusive design centre for excellence, Centre for Inclusive Design mission is to champion Inclusive Design, to reduce disadvantage and increase participation and possibility for everyone. Centre for Inclusive Design works with corporate, startups, education, government and super-connected individuals to demonstrate the value of Inclusive Design in a way that is relevant, usable and valuable to its clients. For more information, visit www.centreforinclusivedesign.org.

About Adobe

Adobe is changing the world through digital experiences. For more information, visit www.adobe.com.au.

About Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq: MSFT) is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realise their full potential.

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