

# Professors Emeriti Network

[Professors Emeriti Network](#). We walk, what we talk.

[Dr. Doug Vogel](#), Professor  
and [eHealth Research Institute Founding Director](#)  
[Harbin Institute of Technology, China](#)  
Currently residing in Perth, Australia  
[ISDoug@HIT.edu.cn](mailto:ISDoug@HIT.edu.cn)

Discussion Contribution. Zoom Meeting on Wednesday, November 15, 2023.  
Retired Academics in Action: Contributing to the Silver Economy Development  
in the Digitized Society

Senior academics, for whom the traditional view of “retired” does not generally fit, have a special role in society in Australia and globally. Most are making continued contributions in one form or another. Some are still, at least in part, sustaining their traditional activities while others have moved into relatively unrelated areas of contribution. It’s interesting to hear more about what they are doing and how they arrived there. Senior academics have experience in developing and disseminating knowledge that can be extremely useful to a broader population and appreciated accordingly. Towards that end, this discussion will focus on “*Retired Academics in Action: Contributing to the Silver Economy Development in the Digitized Society*” with involvement of senior academics currently residing in Australia. The participants come from a range of backgrounds representing the multi-cultural nature of Australia in having contributed to society in multiple fashions over the years.

By way of background, Australia’s population is a bit over 25 million people predominantly located on the coasts, particularly in the East. By comparison, the population of Australia is not much more than the Netherlands’ 18 million people. However, Australia is approximately 7,741,220 sq km, while the Netherlands is approximately 41,543 sq km. This makes the Netherlands 0.54% the size of Australia. In terms of area, Australia is around 183.73 times bigger than the Netherlands. The west coast of Australia is about the size of the western third of the US with a population close to that of Slovenia, most of whom are located in one city, Perth. As such, much of Australia (particularly in the centre/interior) is sparsely populated but also a quite unique scenic desert environment. Australia is an island with no adjoining neighbor countries and also a continent rich in natural resources with a wide range of unique plants and animals, e.g., kangaroos and koalas.

Although the native population goes back over 65,000 years by some accounts, more recent (predominantly European) settlement has occurred since the establishment of a British penal colony in 1788 after the American colonies revolted in 1776. Waves of global settlement have subsequently

followed, leading to claims that Australia is the most ethnically diverse country in the world, although still predominantly ethnically European. Recognising the role that digital technology and data can play in boosting Australia's economy, a Digital Technology Taskforce was established in November 2019. This Taskforce has been asked to look at how Australia can ensure it is a leading digital economy and society by 2030. This includes considering how Government can promote productivity gains through the uptake of digital technology across the Australian economy and how to improve policy integration across government.

Senior academics in Australia have a wide range of interests and often have international as well as domestic experience and remain active in a variety of contexts consistent with the [Digital Technology Taskforce](#), Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 18 March 2022. As such, their contributions extend beyond Australia to embrace global perspectives and opportunities abound. Given the shift in demographics with significantly older populations and fewer young people, a shift in thinking is needed. Senior academics are an underappreciated resource with the potential to contribute strongly and be well-recognized under the right circumstances in keeping with the charter of Australia's Digital Technology Taskforce. Of specific mention is the role and use of data in the digital economy as well as impact and uptake of high potential emerging technologies including artificial intelligence (AI). Australia is a signatory to the recent [Bletchley Declaration](#), a world-first agreement establishing a shared understanding of the opportunities and risks posed by frontier AI. Governments and citizens and society at large can all benefit accordingly if senior academics are given the opportunity to contribute. The following paragraph provides a personal example in this regard.

Doug Vogel established residency in Australia twenty years ago after an active career as a Chair Professor at the City University of Hong Kong. While based in Australia he was invited to create and became the founding director of the eHealth Research Institute at the Harbin Institute of Technology in China. The institute focuses on digital support for wellness with an emphasis on sustained behavioral change. Wellness, in this sense, refers to a wide range of issues and dimensions including attention to diet and food quality as well as exercise plus a lot more, e.g., social, psychological, and emotional. Sustained behavioral change is particularly important to recognize the changing circumstances and dynamics that all of us face during the course of our lives and often encourages engagement with services for support. Additional detail can be found at <http://ehealth.hit.edu.cn/eehealth>. As a Fellow of the Australasian Institute of Digital Health as well as an Association for Information Systems (AIS) Fellow, Professor Vogel continues to disseminate research findings globally. He is particularly involved with the [University of the Third Age in Australia](#) which seeks to promote knowledge sharing in senior contexts.