



# UWA Fogarty Scholars Leader Series Breakfast

August 2017

Create a Growing Community

WA business and community leaders came together at the 2017 UWA Fogarty Leader Series Breakfast to explore how we can all play a part in creating a growing community in WA. Joined by future leaders – the UWA Fogarty Scholars - an expert panel examined some of the most significant issues facing our state. All speakers identified the changing workplace as an opportunity for growth: We need to upskill our workforce and create a pipeline of technology savvy workers, so we are ready to take on the changing world of work.



**WA Chief Scientist, Professor Peter Klinken** described how we are at a ‘pivot point’ where we need to build on our recent successes while reassessing our capabilities to how we will move forward. “Data is the gold of the future,” Professor Klinken said, “and how we use it will become crucial.” Data is a significant resource, and recruiting adequately trained staff in the technology space is difficult in WA. There are jobs, but not enough skilled applicants.

Professor Klinken identified that creating a pipeline of technology enthusiasts will allow WA to have the quantity and quality of skilled workers needed to grow our industries. This requires creating excitement surrounding 21st century tech-based skills in our young people – not stifling them with curriculum and content-driven, highly structured learning. Developing tech thinking is more than content and should be creative and innovative.





**McKinsey and Company partner, Naveen Unni** shared his positive opinion of our state and suggests we should take time and energy to celebrate the many positive aspects. Great people. Great infrastructure. However, Naveen questioned whether in WA we are as productive as some other states and nations.

Naveen also acknowledged the rise in demand for tech qualified workers and explained how local businesses are struggling to fill these labour gaps now. “Technology is no longer a choice” said Naveen. The nature of work itself is changing: Companies need to identify how to adequately upskill their existing workforce. Individuals need new skills and must adapt to new ways of working.

We must prepare to change the way we work, and change the way we manage and structure our organisations. Naveen identified the need for ‘organisational agility’ and ‘personal agility’.



**Mark Shelton, UWA Fogarty Scholar** and John Monash Scholarship recipient, also spoke of the increasing demand for technology educated workers. While he admitted that there is evidence to suggest that the increasing use of automation and robotics by companies will lead to job losses, this can be dramatically offset by jobs focused on creating technology. “There is an opportunity for WA to be the creators of tech, not the victim.”

Mark said that just as WA undertook a concerted effort to increase the quantity of engineering graduates to support a lucrative mining industry, WA can create an increase in the numbers of tech graduates to grow and support a local technology industry.

Mark also suggested this requires a new mindset, focusing on collaboration and problem solving. Operations like Bloom Labs, run out of St Catherine’s College at UWA, which Mark co-founded, facilitate these skills and go beyond the classroom to prepare students for the new world of work.

**Audience members and UWA Fogarty Scholars** were asked to contribute their ideas about what a growing and thriving WA community looks like. While a rich list of ideas emerged, the ideas from the panel, the UWA Fogarty Scholars and the audience members can be distilled as five main areas that lay within the environmental, economic and emotional context of our state. They are:

*Innovative and agile workforce*

*Sustained natural environment*

*Inclusive and connected communities*

*Equity in health and education*

*Opportunities for all West Australians*

Creating a pipeline of educated passionate workers, well prepared to take on new ways of working, retaining talent in WA, and creating tech opportunities to move WA forward were strong messages from the forum. Harnessing new skills and an entrepreneurial spirit was considered essential to create a growing community in WA. An entrepreneurial mindset can move our state forward, and as Mark Shelton described this: “To be an entrepreneur is to be thrown in the deep end and to learn as you go.”



# The WA We Want

## What the Scholars, panel and audience thought...

**Innovative and agile workforce** – creating a pipeline of workers with 21st century skills; open to lifelong learning; re-wire our thinking as workers; creating greater symmetry between education at all levels (primary, secondary, tertiary and VET); new ways of working; collaborative and problem solving skills; tech training; incentives to retain best and brightest in WA; exposure to mentors and role models; creators not just consumers

**Natural environment** – valuing the natural environment; the uniqueness of WA's environment; sustainability; renewable energy; natural resources; size of the state; opportunity for clusters/hubs of industry; proximity to Asia.

**Inclusive and connected** – fair society; closing the gap between 'haves and have nots'; provision of services and infrastructure for metro and regional areas; links between WA and Asia (starting with children); increased understanding of cultural aspects that make up WA community; willingness to take action; connected communities (technology and socially); addressing disadvantage; reducing 'remoteness' (physical and social); opportunities to 'have a go' and to collaborate with others; celebrating success

**Equity in health and education** - world class health facilities; access to primary health care; focus on health care provision; education focused on curiosity and passion, not curriculum/content driven; access to quality and relevant education;

**Opportunities for all West Australians** – that all Western Australians have the opportunity to learn the skills they need for the future, have access to services and infrastructure that creates quality of life, can create connections that enrich their lives.

