Re: Submission to the Economic Reform Roundtable

To the Committee,

Wild Tech is a digital transformation partner working with mid-market and enterprise businesses across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. We help organisations embed automation, scale platforms, and harness AI, both as a technology solution, and a driver of capability and long-term productivity.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the Economic Reform Roundtable and would like to share some frontline observations we've gathered through transformation programs that we have undertaken across manufacturing, retail, logistics, education, healthcare, and renewable energy.

Our leadership team has deep roots in Australian manufacturing. That ethos has shaped how we now work across industries: integrating systems, building resilient operating models, and ensuring digital investments deliver increased efficiencies and real output per hour.

Through our engagements, we've directly observed how productivity acceleration in the APAC region, is being driven by digital fluency, management capability, and adaptive skills infrastructure. In contrast, many Australian businesses remain stuck in low-productivity environments due to outdated workflows, talent shortages, and unclear transformation pathways.

Australia's digital ambition is high. But we are not yet translating that ambition into scalable, system-wide productivity uplift. This submission highlights five practical areas where Australia can move decisively and shift from ambition and vague strategy to applied capability.

We thank the Committee for its consideration and welcome the chance to support this critical national conversation.

Yours sincerely,

Grant Wild
Chief Executive and Director,
Wild Tech

Executive Summary

Productivity is the single most important driver of long-term living standards, wage growth, and economic resilience. Yet Australia's productivity growth has stagnated. ABS data shows that labour-productivity grew by just 0.9% on average over the past 20 years (2022-23), marking the weakest productivity growth in 60 years.

Public debate too often misdiagnoses the issue, suggesting tax changes as a lever for productivity. This is a false link. Changing or increasing taxes is about how we fund government services. It is not a productivity strategy.

True productivity growth comes from how we work, manage, and invest — in people, technology, and systems.

This submission outlines five focus areas that will move the needle on productivity.

1. Drive Technology Adoption and Automation

The Challenge: Productivity growth depends heavily on how efficiently businesses use technology. Yet many Australian SMEs lag in digital adoption, creating a wide gap in output per hour compared to global benchmarks.

Our Recommendations:

Targeted Financial Support

- **Introduce tiered tax incentives and grants** for businesses adopting technologies that directly improve output, including cloud-based ERP systems, robotic process automation (RPA), IoT solutions for supply chain monitoring, and AI-powered decision support tools.

Infrastructure and Collaboration

- **Provide access to shared digital infrastructure hubs** in regional areas to reduce the financial burden on individual SMEs and encourage collaborative investment in digital tools.

Capability Building

- **Launch a national 'Digital Capability Uplift' initiative** with free diagnostics, playbooks, and co-investment models to help businesses identify digital maturity gaps and implement scalable improvements.
- **Establish a 'Digital Leaders Fund'** to support Australian software vendors, systems integrators, and consulting firms delivering fit-for-purpose digital transformation solutions to priority sectors.

Institutional Support

- **Expand the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (ASBFEO)** to include digital transformation advisory services, digital health checks, and vendor-neutral guidance.

2. Modernise Skills Development

The Challenge: Australia's education and training systems are not keeping pace with the changing nature of work. Our productivity challenge is not just about labour quantity — it's about labour quality. The economy is shifting toward digital, technical, and service-oriented roles, yet the skills pipeline remains fragmented and slow to respond.

Our Vision is to build a skills system that is agile, industry-aligned, and future-focused.

Key Recommendations:

Align Training with Market Needs

- **Reform TAFE and VET institutions** to focus on critical skills in high-growth sectors: cybersecurity, data analytics, cloud and enterprise software, advanced manufacturing, renewable energy systems, and allied health and aged care.

Enable Rapid Reskilling

- **Create a national micro-credentials framework** with HECS-style funding for short courses and stackable learning pathways.
- **Partner with tech platforms** (Microsoft, AWS, Atlassian) to certify job-ready credentials.

Embed Digital Literacy

- **Make digital literacy mandatory** in all post-secondary education, including digital fluency, data literacy, and cybersecurity awareness.

Support Career Transitions

- **Create a "Future Skills Fund"** for Australians over 35 to reskill into higher-productivity jobs.
- **Offer tax deductibility or employer subsidies** for training aligned to national skills priorities.

Improve Teaching Quality

- **Introduce national teaching fellowships** for VET educators to collaborate with industry.
- **Incentivise hybrid and digitally enabled delivery models.**

Regional Coordination

- **Establish Skills and Workforce Hubs** co-governed by government, industry, and educators to ensure local training matches local economic demand.

3. Lift Management and Leadership Capability

The Challenge: Strong leadership and management are foundational to productivity. Research shows Australian firms underperform global peers in management capability. This is especially important among SMEs. Better-managed companies are more likely to adopt technology, upskill workers, improve customer satisfaction, and lift output.

Our Recommendations:

Build Management Excellence

- **Create a National Business Management Uplift Program** covering lean operations, financial performance, digital leadership, and people management.
- **Embed productivity metrics in everyday business practice** through tools and dashboards for tracking output, process efficiency, and staff engagement.

Foster Peer Learning

- **Fund industry-based leadership groups**, mentoring circles, and accelerator-style learning programs.
- **Develop a national SME Productivity Toolkit** with diagnostics, benchmarking tools, and action planning templates.

Drive Standards

- **Tie grant funding and procurement eligibility to management maturity**, prioritising organisations that demonstrate data-driven, outcome-focused leadership.

4. Remove Regulatory Bottlenecks

The Challenge: Regulatory complexity is a hidden tax on productivity. Cumbersome approvals, inconsistent rules, and legacy systems delay growth and stifle innovation.

Our Recommendations:

Digital-First Government

- **Digitise and streamline planning systems** with national APIs, e-lodgement, automatic workflow tracking, and real-time progress dashboards.
- **Create a single-entry compliance portal for SMEs**, consolidating licensing, payroll, tax, safety, and reporting obligations.

Reduce Duplication

- **Harmonise regulation across jurisdictions** and accelerate mutual recognition of professional credentials.
- **Establish "Productivity Zones"** with fast-track approvals, simplified compliance, and coordinated regulatory support.

Build in Accountability

- **Apply a "Productivity Impact Statement" to all new legislation**, requiring mandatory assessment of how laws affect business efficiency and economic output.

5. Invest in Innovation and Commercialisation

The Challenge: Innovation drives long-run productivity, but Australia ranks poorly in commercialising research and scaling emerging technologies. Public R&D spending is relatively high, but translation into business output is low. We need a system that rewards outcomes, not activity.

Our Recommendations:

Reform Existing Programs

- **Reform the R&D Tax Incentive** to focus on outcome-based metrics (IP created, commercial revenue), scaled support for high-growth scale-ups, and industry collaboration requirements.

Bridge the Valley of Death

- **Create Innovation Commercialisation Grants (ICGs)** with co-funding for startups transitioning from lab to market, focusing on hardware, biotech, energy, deep tech, and clean manufacturing.

Build Innovation Ecosystems

- **Expand public-private innovation precincts** in health, agriculture, clean energy, defence tech, and AI.
- **Co-locate startups, universities, corporates, and investors** in shared facilities.

Attract and Retain Talent

- **Introduce a fast-track Global Innovation Visa** for founders, scientists, and technologists.
- **Fund secondments between academia and industry** to transfer capability.

Strengthen IP Systems

- **Develop a National IP Strategy** with simplified patenting processes and IP literacy support for SMEs and startups.

Scale for Export

- **Launch an Innovation Export Accelerator** with scale-up funding, go-to-market support, and global partner matchmaking.

Conclusion

Australia faces a decisive moment. Our productivity growth has slowed, real wages have stagnated, and global competitiveness is under pressure.

While some voices continue to call for tax reform as a fix, this misses the point: productivity is not about who pays what — it's about how effectively we generate value across the economy.

Tax policy determines how we fund public services. Productivity policy determines how we grow the national economy.

The future of Australia's economic prosperity will not be secured by reshuffling the tax burden. It will be secured by equipping our businesses, workers, and institutions to do more with less, and to do it smarter.

This means:

- Giving businesses access to the tools and technologies that lift output per hour

- Reskilling workers to match the digital and green economy

- Lifting the quality of leadership and management across all industries

- Removing friction and duplication from regulation

- Commercialising world-class ideas from our labs, startups, and universities

Every one of these levers is about capability, not collection.

To win the productivity race in the decade ahead, Australia must stop treating productivity as a vague economic concept. Instead, we must see it as a national mission — one that requires coordination, courage, and clear policy direction.

It's time to reframe the debate: Productivity is not about tax. It's about transformation.

Respectfully submitted,

Grant Wild
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