

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**AIIA welcomes \$1.2b investment in digital, but
says more needs to be done to further AI and health tech sector**

Australia's peak industry representative body for innovation technology, the Australian Information Industry Association ([AIIA](#)), welcomed the Federal Government's pre-Budget announcement as a good start to position Australia as a leading digital economy by 2030.

The Federal Government's \$1.2 billion investment is about securing Australia's economic recovery in a world of continuing uncertainty. The announcement today is focused on improving systems across artificial intelligence (AI), health, digital skills, cyber security and digital payments for SMBs.

The federal funding announcement allocates \$124.1 million to the nation's capability in AI aiming to ensure Australia becomes a global leader in AI research and commercialisation. While the budget allocation falls short of the \$250 million required to fully fund the National AI strategy, the AIIA recognises that this investment is a significant improvement of previous funding.

Additionally, \$500 million will be allocated to give consumers greater access to their health and government data via a makeover to the MyGov website and the My Health Record service. A further \$100 million has been committed to the development of digital skills in the workforce, including the creation of cadetships. However, the ICT sector will continue to advocate for greater investment to achieve a globally competitive industry.

AIIA CEO, Mr Ron Gauci said: "We applaud the Federal Government's recognition that this transformation is not merely a national one but a global one that is happening. The AIIA has been calling out our need to keep pace with the global trend. The investment of \$1.2 billion is recognition of the fact that the ICT sector is at the heart of every industry and the Federal Government must continue to invest in this sector to secure our economic independence for years to come.

"We have been advocating for significant investment in health, skills, cybersecurity, digital payments and AI. Today's announcement committing an investment of \$124.1 million for AI shows the Federal Government's continued commitment to ensuring Australia becomes a leading digital economy. However, in April we demonstrated that to fully fund a National AI Strategy, \$250 million was needed. While investment in R&D is important, more needs to be done to ensure that there is significant investment in the commercialisation of AI here in Australia to deliver jobs and economic growth. Without it we will continue to fall behind the rest of the world.

"We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reshape the technology at the core of the Australian health system. Now is the time to create lasting structural change as a result of setting up a strong and efficient national ICT health backbone and the investment of \$500 million will go

some way to bringing this to reality. The AIIA remains committed to working with the Federal Government in its COVID-19 vaccination roll out delivering integration across platforms.

“The AIIA recognises the Federal Government’s \$100 million allocation towards the development of digital skills in the workforce, including the creation of cadetships. With long held skills shortages in Australia’s ICT sector, the AIIA’s Skills Hub is one measure to help improve the supply of skilled Australian workers as well as mapping employee skills to career pathways and relevant training courses. The AIIA Skills Hub is in active discussions with an additional 15 universities and TAFEs as well as industry courses from leading technology companies. Once these are onboarded, the AIIA Skills Hub will exceed 5,000 courses available to members by the end of 2021.

“Australia’s ongoing prosperity depends on its ability to innovate requiring leadership, clear policies and a national innovation strategy. As a nation, we must support our innovators and ensure Australia can retain ownership of our brilliant creations and ensure we do not fall behind our international peers,” concluded Mr Gauci.

The full Digital Economy Strategy will be released on Budget night, alongside further measures that support and complement the Strategy.

The AIIA is a not-for-profit organisation aimed at fuelling Australia’s future social and economic prosperity through technology innovation.

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Notes to Editor

- In late April 2021, the [AIIA](#) released a Whitepaper titled: ‘[Beyond Telehealth, Towards Virtual Care](#)’, recommending governments make better use of the technological benefits of virtual care to advance patient and community outcomes. The AIIA found that funding, training and greater adoption of digital health technology, including monitoring, diagnostic and co-working tools, at clinics and hospitals is key to the optimal implementation of telehealth. Further, it found the integration of hardware, software, people, processes, information, security and information technology systems must be encompassed in strategies to break down technology barriers.
- The AIIA recently released a white paper titled ‘[Building Australia’s Digital Future in a Post-COVID World](#)’, which emphasised the need to look beyond traditional infrastructure investment by government with more focus on technology infrastructure.
- ‘[Artificial Intelligence: Solving problems, growing the economy and improving our quality of life](#)’ was published by the Australian Government in November 2019, and co-developed by CSIRO’s Data61 and the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science. The report identifies strategies to help develop a national AI capability to boost the productivity of Australian industry, create jobs and economic growth, and improve the quality of life for current and future generations.

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About AIIA

The Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA) is Australia's peak representative body and advocacy group for those in the digital ecosystem. Since 1978 AIIA has pursued activities to stimulate and grow the digital ecosystem, to create a favourable business environment for members and to contribute to Australia's economic prosperity. We do this by delivering outstanding member value by providing a strong voice of influence; building a sense of community through events and education; enabling a network for collaboration and inspiration; and developing compelling content and relevant and interesting information.