FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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AIIA members declare strong business confidence, with high demand for cybersecurity skills in the ICT sector

Australia's peak industry representative body for innovation technology, the Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA) has released the results of its survey it conducted with Australia's ICT industry. Respondents included AIIA members, from multinational ICT firms through to local start-up firms, that form Australia's tech-ecosystem.

Respondents believe the possibilities innovative technologies offer the Australian economy are not being realised by governments. Just 35 per cent of respondents said they believe that governments understand the importance of the ICT sector to the Australian economy. Positively, this is an increase on 2020 results, but demonstrates the gap that exists between industry and government.

Survey respondents strongly agree that governments need to increase industry engagement, with 73 per cent of respondents agreeing this is a key way governments can improve their understanding of and approach to ICT related opportunities and challenges. This was followed by governments making improvements to their ICT procurement processes (60.9 per cent). The Government and infrastructure sectors are expected to have the greatest adoption and growth of ICT in 2021, with nearly 85 per cent of respondents nominating this.

Confidence in the Australian economy is very strong, with 69 per cent of respondents indicating positivity for the future of the Australian economy. Just 15.5 per cent of respondents are concerned about the future of the Australian economy.

This is also reflected by the fact 73 per cent of respondents said they expect to be actively growing and hiring in 2021. Sixty-five per cent of respondents indicated that they are looking to hire staff with cyber security skills in 2021, an increase of 10 per cent compared to the AIIA's 2020 survey results. Cloud specific skills are the second most in-demand skills, with nearly 60 per cent of respondents indicating they will be hiring staff with these skills in 2021.

Impacting the growth of the Australian ICT sector, skills shortages were nominated as the greatest barrier to growth. Recently, the AIIA launched their Skills Hub to help address Australia's skills shortages in the ICT sector. The Skills Hub aims to grow the local skills base and to improve employment opportunities for industry and workers.

AIIA CEO, Mr Ron Gauci said: "The AIIA's member survey shows clearly there is strong confidence in the Australian economy amongst the ICT sector. Our members are keen to continue to expand their businesses and hire local talent to support this. The demand for local skills, led by skills in cyber security, is strong in Australia.

"The skills shortages demonstrate our governments' need to do more to help fill these skills shortages. It is important for Australia's digital sovereignty that we are able to fulfil this demand with local skills. Both State governments and the Federal government need to support the skills development of our domestic workforce to help meet the demand for these skills. Working and engaging with industry is the best way for governments to achieve this," he said.

A recent study by ACS found the technology sector contributed 805,525 jobs to the Australian economy. The ICT sector is expected to continue its strong growth and provide more than 1.1million jobs in Australia within the next five years.

"Australia's economic recovery can be led by innovation and investment in technology. Governments must continue work to address Australia's digital skills to support our digital transformation, provide a skilled workforce to support economic growth and to protect our digital sovereignty. The AIIA will continue to champion this for our members, lobby governments to support domestic skills development and support our members needs with platforms such as the AIIA's Skills Hub," Mr Gauci concluded.

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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Survey methodology:
In March 2021, a follow-up survey was conducted to the March 2020 survey conducted by the AIIA. Results reflect both the historical impact of the pandemic, as well as the transition throughout Australia towards recovery, both economic and social. Both surveys were nationwide, and both covered the full scope and breadth of the Australian technology sector.

Key Stats
- 35 per cent of respondents said they believe that governments understand the importance of the ICT sector to the Australian economy
- Respondents to the survey indicated that the three biggest improvements governments could undertake to improve their understanding and approach to ICT are:
  1. Increase industry engagement (73%)
  2. Improve ICT procurement processes (60.9%)
  3. Attract, retain and or upskill government employees (60%)
- 85 per cent of respondents nominated the the Government and infrastructure sectors to have the greatest adoption and growth of ICT in 2021
- 69 per cent of respondents indicated they are confident in the economic future of the Australian economy
- 73 per cent of respondents said they expect to be actively growing and hiring in 2021
- Cyber security skills are in the most demand, with 65 per cent of respondents nominating this a focus on new hiring in 2021

Notes to Editor

- The AIIA's **Skills Hub** has over 3,000 courses available, produced by some of Australia's leading tertiary education providers including RMIT, QUT, University of Queensland, Central Queensland University, University of Sydney and NSW and QLD TAFE. Microsoft, IBM and AWS have also made courses available on the Skills Hub. More than 5,000 courses are expected to be available by the end of 2021. Individuals are able to create a Skills Passport to map and manage their skills for career development.
- 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.

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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.