

# **Australian Information Industry Association**

## **Submission on the**

## **2024–25 Queensland Budget**

**17 November 2023**

## Introduction

The Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA) thanks the Queensland Treasury for the opportunity to respond to the 2024-2025 Queensland Budget consultation. This submission advocates for additional and targeted funding to drive digital innovation for the Queensland economy, noting the \$200M earmarked<sup>1</sup> is insufficient to cover the 74-line items in the new '*Our Thriving Digital Future: Queensland's Digital Economy Strategy*'<sup>2</sup> and 2023-2026 Action Plan.<sup>3</sup>

## Legacy 'tech debt' threatens the 2024-25 Budget's goals

On Digital Government Readiness and Maturity, Queensland is currently placed second last among 10 Australian jurisdictions, according to the most recent Intermedium report.<sup>4</sup> The report found Queensland playing catch-up in citizen-centric service delivery, procurement reform and collaboration. As an example, another report found the citizens in Aurukun Shire, Far North Queensland to be the second most digitally excluded Local Government Areas in the whole of Australia.<sup>5</sup> Queensland governments have underinvested in its digital capability over the last decade leading to a 'tech legacy debt' that has serious implications for meeting Queensland's goals of delivering better services, creating more jobs in more industries, and protecting the Queensland lifestyle in the 2024-25 Budget. It also has a further dampening effect on its dreams of having state-of-the-art facilities for Olympics 2032.

Whilst the AIIA notes the Queensland Government just launched its new '*Our Thriving Digital Future: Queensland's Digital Economy Strategy*' to replace the *DIGITAL1ST: Advancing Our Digital Future* strategy, the success of its new plan is only possible when backed by sufficient funding. The AIIA notes with concern, that in the pressing years of the COVID pandemic, when other jurisdictions invested for growth, Queensland scaled back its funding on digital government systems and programs.<sup>6</sup> In 2023, Departments still have to create stop-gap measures by funding and driving digital transformation themselves.<sup>7</sup> Most notably, the Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) has taken leadership in service delivery initiatives such as digital licences that did not receive standalone budget project funds at its inception.

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<sup>1</sup> Queensland Government, [\\$200 million Digital Economy Strategy to fast-track Queensland's growth](#), 27 April 2023

<sup>2</sup> Queensland Government, Our Thriving Digital Future: [Queensland's Digital Economy Strategy](#)

<sup>3</sup> Queensland Government, Our Thriving Digital Future: [2023-2026 Action Plan](#)

<sup>4</sup> Intermedium, Digital Government Readiness and Maturity Indicator [Report 2023](#).

<sup>5</sup> Australian Digital Inclusion Index, Measuring Australia's Digital Divide, [2023](#).

<sup>6</sup> Intermedium (n 4) p 100.

<sup>7</sup> Intermedium (n 4) p 9.

## **2023-2026 Action Plan lacks details for accountability and correspondingly, clear funding estimates or allocation**

The AIIA is concerned about the lack of details in the 2023-2026 Action Plan. For example, while there is a list of projects in Priority 6 on digitally enabled government, it is unclear how much funding would be allocated to each item<sup>8</sup> or when they would be delivered. We noticed similarly high-level lists for Priority 4 on industries and business excellence and Priority 5 on pipeline of talent for digital careers. Whilst we acknowledged the earmarking of \$200M for it over the next three years, we question if it would sufficiently fund the 74-line items in the Action Plan.

## **Recommendations**

AIIA urges the Palaszczuk Government to allocate the funding required to effectively drive its Action Plan. We iterate the recommendations in our Queensland Pre-Election Policy Statement<sup>9</sup>:

1. Specific allocation of funding to schools for training both students and teachers on digital skills, with a particular focus on underprivileged institutions and indigenous communities.
2. Specific increase in funding to support and accelerate the current Queensland Government Funded trials for micro credentialing programs and expand to include Queensland government technology workers.
3. Work with AIIA to develop a public-private partnership to create the Digital Skills Guild. Through our membership, the AIIA will work with key service providers – our members – to create a program of curriculum and training in the latest technologies at no cost for government employees. Several large ICT organisations have already committed to providing material to support this initiative.
4. Target to train 50% of the IT workforce in Queensland Government with basic new skills by 2026 through the AIIA Digital Skills Guild.
5. Target to offer training to 100% of non-IT workforce staff interested in reskilling, enabling new career pathways through the Digital Skills Guild by 2026.

## **Conclusion**

The AIIA and its members are committed to working with the Government as it weighs and considers implementation of the recommendations of the submission, in support for a prosperous digital economy for Queensland and improved lifestyles for Queenslanders. Should you have any questions about the content of this submission please contact Ms Siew Lee Seow, General Manager, Policy and Media at [siewlee@aiia.com.au](mailto:siewlee@aiia.com.au).

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<sup>8</sup> Includes establishing core and common platforms, innovation capability, cybersecurity, state archiving, business payroll tax reporting, for example.

<sup>9</sup> AIIA, [Queensland Pre-Election Policy Statement](#), September 2020.

## About the AIIA

The Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA) is Australia's peak representative body and advocacy group for those in the digital ecosystem. We are a not-for-profit organisation to benefit members, which represents about 300 companies and 900,000 employed in the tech sector in Australia. Since 1978, the AIIA has pursued activities to stimulate and grow the digital ecosystem, to create a favourable business environment for our 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.

We are unique in that we represent the diversity of the tech ecosystem from small and medium businesses, start-ups, universities and digital incubators through to large Australian companies, multinational software and hardware companies, data centres, telecommunications companies and technology consulting companies.