

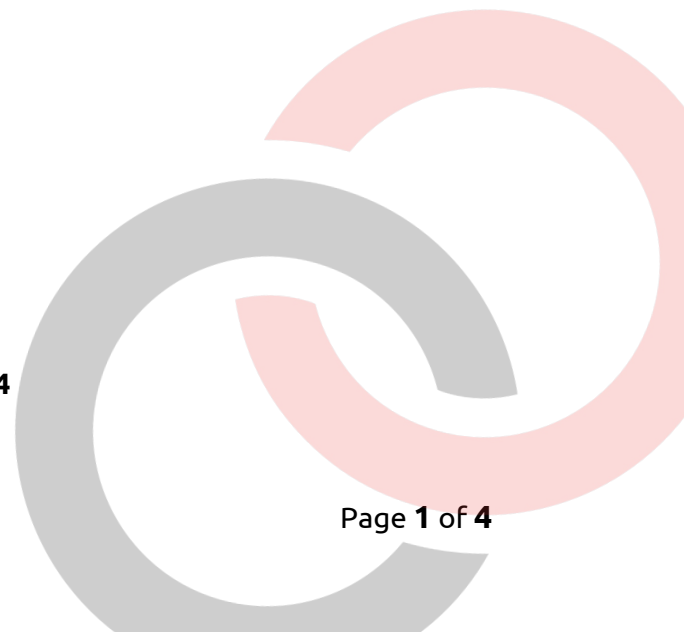


Australian Information Industry Association

Submission on

**Australian Skills Guarantee Discussion Paper:
Setting targets for Major ICT Projects**

4 December 2024



Introduction

The Australian Information Industry Association ('AIIA') welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' consultation on the Australian Skills Guarantee Discussion Paper: Setting targets for Major ICT Projects. As the peak body for the technology sector, the AIIA is committed to ensuring that government policies support a strong, inclusive, and future-ready digital workforce, becoming an exemplar in digital skills development.

The findings of the [AIIA Digital State of the Nation 2024 Survey](#) highlight the importance of addressing skills shortages in the ICT sector, with 64% of respondents identifying skills deficit as a significant challenge and emphasising the need for the government to invest in and adapt vocational and STEM education systems to better promote IT skills aligned with industry needs. In line with these priorities, the AIIA has supported initiatives such as the NSW Digital Skills and Workforce Compact's Alternative Pathways Pledge, which commits organisations to ensuring that 20% of their entry-level digital hires come from alternative educational pathways.

We also note the Australian Skills Guarantee Discussion Paper recommendations are in line with the AIIA's recommendations in '[Building Australia's Digital Future in a Post-Covid World](#)', namely,

- building and embracing a national learning culture (page 22)
- leveraging micro-credentials (page 23)

The AIIA believes there is further opportunity to support Learning Workers with critical skills - namely Artificial Intelligence & Data, Cloud Computing, Cyber Security, Automation and Internet of Things - to increase adoption of emerging technologies for greater productivity and underprivileged institutions to close the digital divide.

Definition of a Learning Worker

We support the proposed definition of a Learning Worker, which includes apprentices, cadets, those undertaking Accredited VET or Higher Education, and those engaged in Accredited Microcredentials.

However, we recommend supporting more alternative pathways to acknowledge different socioeconomic circumstances and widen the pool of candidates. In particular, the AIIA notes that industry certifications are particularly valuable in the ICT sector, where skillsets are often validated through these qualifications.

We suggest amending the definition to include:

Currently undertaking or successfully completes an industry certification relevant to the employment and skills needs of the employer while employed on the relevant Eligible Project.

ICT Targets for Learning Workers

The 10% cap on Labour Hours by workers engaged in Accredited Microcredentials should remain an initial position subject to regular review. In the ICT sector, more so than in less service-oriented industries, Learning Workers may pursue multiple stackable microcredentials that collectively lead to a skill set or qualification. Regular reviews will ensure that the cap remains relevant and supports both industry needs and the evolving nature of education in the sector.

ICT Targets for Women

We acknowledge the aim of the recommendations to enhance diversity in the ICT workforce by increasing women's participation. While we see potential in the proposal for more ambitious targets for projects valued at \$50 million or more, the specifics of what is meant by "higher targets" remain unclear. Although the paper indicates these requirements would align with existing approaches for similar initiatives (i.e., Skills Guarantee PCP for Flagship Construction Projects), we recommend providing greater detail on the expected benchmarks. We note that projects of this size have a greater capacity to achieve more ambitious targets and these initiatives can help ensure significant projects lead by example in promoting diversity.

Conclusion

The AIIA appreciates the Department's efforts to address skills shortages and promote greater diversity in the ICT sector. We look forward to continuing to work with the Department to ensure the successful implementation of these measures.

Should you require further information, please contact Ms Siew Lee Seow, General Manager, Policy and Media, at siewlee@aiaa.com.au or 0435 620 406, or Mr David Makaryan, Advisor, Policy and Media, at david@aiaa.com.au.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Yours sincerely
Simon Bush
CEO, AIIA

About the AIIA

The AIIA is Australia's peak representative body and advocacy group for those in the digital ecosystem. 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 are a not-for-profit organisation to benefit members, which represents around 90% of the over one million employed in the technology sector in Australia. We are unique in that we represent the diversity of the technology 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