



Press release
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Australia's AI policy fails the crisis test, Social Cyber Institute warns

CANBERRA – Australia is treating artificial intelligence as an investment opportunity when it should be managing it as a national crisis. That is the warning from the Social Cyber Institute in a new summary of its research findings.

The summary “[*Navigating the AI Policy Crisis*](#)”, was released today. Its authors are Dr Greg Austin, Dr Gary Waters and Professor Glenn Withers. It argues that AI already meets the three defining tests of a crisis: an existential threat, accelerating urgency, and deep uncertainty amid great-power competition.

"AI systems are moving faster than governance frameworks and political decision-making," said Dr Greg Austin, Co-founder and Research Director of the Social Cyber Institute. "Governments are responding to discrete harms with piecemeal measures, while declining to acknowledge the systemic challenge."

The authors find that governments worldwide, Australia's included, send contradictory signals. They warn of existential risk while in effect downplaying the need for deep regulation, and in practice leave control to a small number of corporations.

We can cite three examples of a gap between rhetoric and policy in Australia:

- **Data centres:** Microsoft's A\$25 billion AI infrastructure investment may proceed under the Government's non-binding "expectations", which create no new legal obligations. New laws on data centres and related projects will not be retrospective.
- **Lethal autonomous weapons:** Australia has endorsed substantive frameworks but declined to support formal treaty negotiations. It prefers consensus-bound forums where resistant states hold an effective veto.
- **The Prime Minister's statement of 15 July 2026:** The analysis describes it as "an investment-attraction strategy with a safety vocabulary attached."

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About the Social Cyber Institute

The Social Cyber Institute (SCI) creates new social science insights to complement technology in the fight for a more secure cyberspace. The Institute is a non-profit research centre. It may be the only research centre in the country with a policy project dedicated to [AI Consequences for Australia](#). See also our [list of submissions and background notes](#).