Minister for Emergency Services; Innovation and the Digital Economy; Medical Research; Volunteering; Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Our ref: 62-

Hon Ed Husic MP
Minister for Industry and Science
Via website: https://consult.industry.gov.au/supporting-responsible-ai/submission

Dear Minister Ed

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT'S SAFE AND RESPONSIBLE AI IN AUSTRALIA DISCUSSION PAPER

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Commonwealth Government's Safe and Responsible AI in Australia Discussion Paper. I am responding on behalf of the Western Australian (WA) Government.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a rapidly evolving field, and AI technology is being developed and implemented at an accelerating rate in an array of functions by both governments and industries globally. The WA Government supports the work being undertaken to identify gaps in Australia's existing regulation and governance to develop additional measures to further safeguard and mitigate risks.

The WA Government has initiated a process to establish measures for safe and responsible AI adoption. While this is being developed, the WA Government has adopted the Commonwealth Digital Transformation Agency's *Adoption of AI in the Public Sector* paper as interim guidance for WA Government agencies.

Artificial Intelligence usage in the WA Government

There is moderate uptake of AI technology across the WA public sector. Current uses of AI in the WA Government include supporting sophisticated data analytics; streamlining business processes and operations; and supporting timely access to information and knowledge critical for government service delivery. The WA Government is seeking to collaborate with industry and academic researchers to progress innovative AI initiatives and sees great potential in the application of AI in particular sectors, including education and health.

The WA Department of Education (DoE) is a participant on the national taskforce to develop an evidence-based, best-practice framework to guide schools in harnessing artificial intelligence tools to support teaching and learning. To support this, DoE has developed guidance for staff outlining responsibilities and considerations when using generative AI in school.

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Artificial Intelligence is at the forefront of technologies that are transforming healthcare, globally, in all aspects of the value chain. From AI-enabled manufacturing processes delivering new clinical tools and equipment, to AI-enabled logistics reducing time and cost in hospital inventory management, AI-driven billing and financial management systems, and through to the clinical application in areas such AI-assisted imaging, AI-assisted remote patient monitoring, and interactive surgical systems and beyond. The possibilities and benefits of AI in healthcare are significant.

Increasingly, this includes a range of clinical use cases, ranging from small-scale user-driven adoption, through to significant strategic programs of work that are driving transformational change in the way clinical services are delivered and supported.

AI will be critical to health moving forward. All the safety and quality improvements that run out of Electronic Medical Records systems, other than medication management, either rely on AI currently, or will rely on AI as the systems mature and improve. As the patient records become increasingly electronic, AI will support clinician decision making through data discovery, extraction of complex findings, and facilitating the use of large data sets to generate personalised treatment recommendations, all of which can help improve patient outcomes.

Artificial Intelligence Ecosystems

Governments have an active role in supporting industry and the academic sector by enabling vibrant AI ecosystems. The WA Government supports a number of initiatives that encourage the diversification, productivity, and competitiveness of Western Australian industries and businesses through the development of AI and intersecting capabilities such as data science, high performance computing and cybersecurity. Examples include:

- The Australian Remote Operations for Space and Earth; Australian Space Automation, Artificial Intelligence and Robotics Control Complex; and the Australian Space Data Analysis Facility.
- Pawsey Supercomputing Research Centre, which uses artificial intelligence techniques to optimise the massive data sets it manipulates.
- CyberWest (formerly known as the Western Australia Cyber Security Innovation Hub), which accelerates cyber capability, innovation and commercialisation across critical infrastructure, cybercrime and big data.
- WA Data Science Innovation Hub (WADSIH), which works to increase the uptake, education and training of data science. For example, WADSIH is running a Hackathon with the Department of Health focussing on the feasibility of synthetic data for health applications.

AI already is being used across many sectors in WA, particularly in the resources, space, defence and health industries due to the need to process vast quantities of data, automate processes and support decision making in these areas. For example:

- WA's resources sector is a world-leader in the implementation of AI and machine learning for the purpose of increasing efficiency, ensuring safety and, increasingly, improving sustainability. AI and machine learning are used widely across the entire resources supply chain.

- In the Defence sector, AI capabilities are being used or explored across industry, academia and Defence. This will help support decision making and optimisation of processes.

AI and machine learning underpin many activities in space research and industry, and the use of AI is particularly critical for radio astronomy, earth observation and space.

The WA Premier's Science Fellowships program has been used to grow in WA a new interdisciplinary area of artificial intelligence research which sits at the intersection of engineering, mathematics and social science. The new area is emerging as a result of the Fellowship project "Addressing Societal Challenges Associated with Misinformation Using Systems Engineering, Artificial Intelligence and Data Science". This project will strengthen existing misinformation detection algorithms through advancing the fundamental science concerning misinformation as the power of machine learning and AI algorithms depends on the soundness of the fundamental science guiding their development.

Artificial Intelligence risk mitigation and governance

The use of AI is not without risks and challenges. AI requires human oversight, good governance and appropriate controls to be in place to protect the citizen and the community.

The WA Government recognises the need for a multi-faceted approach to the adoption of AI technologies. AI has many possible benefits and transformative potential, and can be leveraged to diversify the economy, create new employment opportunities, optimise processes and improve government service delivery and decision making.

Across Australian jurisdictions there is substantial variation in the approach and adoption of AI technology and the WA Government supports a national approach in principle. Nationally consistent governance and regulatory measures that support the wider adoption of AI by focusing on fairness, transparency and accountability are critical to ensuring the benefits of AI can be responsibly realised. In conjunction with national and international best practice, states and territories should maintain autonomy to develop their own AI policies to meet the unique needs of their jurisdictions.

WA is keen to collaborate with the Commonwealth and states and territories to identify appropriate governance, frameworks, and policies to mitigate these risks and address privacy and ethical concerns. It will be important to balance the need for AI regulation against the risk of stifling AI adoption and innovation across industry and government.

Ideally any approach will keep pace with the technology as it evolves, be consistent with international best practice to allow interoperability of applications and allow for collaboration with academic and industry sectors.

The initiatives cited in this submission demonstrate the WA Government's commitment to supporting innovation through the adoption of AI. WA has initiated establishment of an approach to AI at a state level and is committed to actively collaborating with the Commonwealth and states and territories to develop an overarching national response to AI.

I look forward to further opportunities to engage in discussions and collaborate on the development, use and governance of AI in Australia.

Yours sincerely

Hon Stephen Dawson MLC
MINISTER FOR INNOVATION AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY