Editorial

Australia's National Artificial Intelligence Plan

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Abstract: As with many countries in the world that are primarily technology takers, rather than technology leaders, Australia is seeking to address the issues for its place in the global digital ecosystem and to identify, and then realise, the opportunities that artificial intelligence (AI) may bring. On 2 December 2025, the Australian Government published its much-awaited National Artificial Intelligence Plan. In our editorial, we broadly summarise the Plan and discuss some initial reactions to it. We hope to revisit the subject in 2026 to find out how the Plan has fared at that stage. Also, we outline the eight technical papers published in this issue. In personnel changes, we note the resignation of the previous Editor-in-Chief.

Keywords: Editorial, AI, Artificial Intelligence, National Plans, Australian Government

Australia's *National Artificial Intelligence Plan* – Is Excitement Premature?

On 2 December 2025, the Minister for Industry and Innovation and the Assistant Minister for Science, Technology and the Digital Economy jointly launched the Commonwealth Government's National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Plan – hereafter the Plan (Industry, 2025).

In a nutshell, the Plan is, in the words of the Ministers:

> "… a key pillar of the government's Future Made in Australia agenda. By building sovereign capability in AI, supporting local innovation and ensuring that Australian workers and businesses are equipped to lead in the global digital economy, we are laying the foundations for a more resilient and competitive Australia. The National AI Plan complements our broader efforts to revitalise Australian industry, create high-value jobs and ensure that the benefits of technological progress are realised here at home" (Industry, 2025, p. 5).

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The Plan has three goals: (1) capturing the AI opportunity; (2) spreading the AI benefits; and (3) keeping Australians safe. The Plan proposes to capture the AI opportunity by building smart infrastructure (with much emphasis on data centres), by backing Australian AI capability, and by attracting investment to the Australian AI sector. Building smart infrastructure involves considerably more than facilitating data centre development. The Plan includes expanding the National Broadband Network, investing in cybersecurity and securing critical infrastructure, and guiding future investing to and within the AI sector.

The Government's National AI Centre (NAIC, 2024), established in 2021 has an important role in supporting industry to unlock the economic benefits of AI and in developing widespread AI literacy in industry and the workforce generally. The Plan reinforces that role.

The AI ecosystem involves a wide diversity of organisations and institutions. The roles of these are noted in the Plan, from Cooperative Research Centres, to a myriad of different ministries, educational, employers, trade unions, urban planning and utility authorities (in relation to data centres), and many others. In addition to the NAIC, the Plan includes the establishment an AI Safety Institute (AISI) to monitor, test and share information on emerging AI capabilities, risks and harms.

Then, there is the matter of money. The Plan does not propose any new Government money to fund its AI ambitions. However, it does note that "the government is backing this ambition with more than $460 million in existing funding already available or committed to AI and related initiatives" (Industry, 2025, p. 13). The $460 million is made up of:

- over $362 million in targeted grants from the Australian Research Council, Medical Research Future Fund, National Health and Medical Research Council, and Cooperative Research Centres;
- $47 million for the Next Generation Graduates Program;
- $39.9 million to strengthen Australia's AI ecosystem, which includes expanding the NAIC; and
- $17 million for the AI Adopt Program to support SMEs.

So, how has the Plan been received? Overall, without enthusiasm. It received no coverage in some industry media, and elicited scepticism in others.

For example, James Riley, the Editorial Director of InnovationAus.com accused the Plan of not being a plan at all and of lacking ambition. He wrote: "… it delivers a set of blue-sky aspirations or objectives, but without describing the steps to reach those objectives. Without detail or focus, this is a plan that smells a lot like wishful thinking" (Riley, 2025). He further

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notes that "there is no ambition for building Australia's AI talent pipeline with the best and brightest". That ambition would have required significant new funding.

TelSoc, the publisher of this *Journal*, has for many years advocated Government leadership in developing meaningful plans to secure Australia's digital future. TelSoc's interest to date has been in terms of broadband and related infrastructure, rather than AI specifically (TelSoc, 2021). The publication of a Plan of this kind meets some of TelSoc's aims, including that the Government should take a leadership and coordinating role, rather than rely unduly on the market to shape outcomes. Perhaps the Plan might be best regarded as the start of a coordinated public conversation on Australia's AI future and priorities, rather than as a comprehensive blueprint to achieve goals by, say, 2030 or 2035. The actual goals in the Plan for 2030 are vague in any case. For example, under Capturing the Opportunities: "By 2030 … [o]ur digital infrastructure sustainably supports AI innovation to benefit our communities" (Industry, 2025, p. 9). Perhaps they will become specific and measurable as the Plan is revised and reviewed.

The Plan has been a while in the making and satisfies the Australian Government's immediate political requirement to have a reasonably compelling document that it can point to as its plan for AI. But is the Plan more than a performative exercise, or does it provide a substantive boost to the development of a commercially viable, ethically acceptable AI industry in Australia? Clearly, it is too early to tell, but the question should be asked time and again as we move into this new era. We have seen many fine statements, plans and reports published with fanfare over the past decade, only to wither on the vine through neglect and lack of commitment to follow through. That is a risk with this Plan, but perhaps the noise levels and daily reinforcement of the importance of AI will ensure this Plan becomes something more.

In This Issue

Continuing the theme of AI, this issue includes two papers that principally depend on AI techniques. Purwanto *et al.* (2025), published in the section on Digital Economy & Society, describe an AI-based model for predicting sales in small and medium enterprises, supporting their digital transformation. Kahoul *et al.* (2025) in the Telecommunications section demonstrate, using real operational data from Algeria, how an ensemble of AI techniques, including explainable AI, can be used for identifying anomalies in LTE networks. We receive many submissions on the use of AI and expect to publish many more in the future.

In the Digital Economy & Society section, in addition to Purwanto *et al.* (2025), there is one other paper. Mgadmi *et al.* (2025) look at the effects that financial technologies have on economic growth and foreign direct investments, using data from both developed and developing economies.

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In the Telecommunications section, we have three papers, including Kahoul *et al.* (2025) described earlier. Balcioğlu *et al.* (2025) look at how paid subscriptions affect the way users engage with social media platforms, with data from Instagram. Agrawal & Sridhar (2025) consider how to continue public Wi-Fi programs through regulatory support.

We include two Industry Case Studies. The first, by Ramirez *et al.* (2025), describes a process mining technique to identify bottlenecks and other adverse features in customer-facing operations. Hentati & Jallouli (2025) undertake a systematic literature review to summarize how text-mining methods are being used in mobile banking apps to assess user satisfaction.

This issue's historical reprint (Moorhead, 2025) continues our interest in the state of broadband services in Australia with a look back to a tutorial paper on the situation in 2007.

As always, we welcome comments from our readers on any of these topics.

Personnel Changes

Dr Michael de Percy resigned as Editor-in-Chief in October due to changed personal circumstances. He remains a member of the Board of Editors and an Associate Editor for Public Policy. We thank Michael de Percy for successfully stewarding the first three issues of 2025.

The TelSoc Board has appointed Dr Leith Campbell, a former Managing Editor, as the new Editor-in-Chief, with Dr Jim Holmes as his Deputy. This is an interim arrangement until a longer-term Editor-in-Chief can be found.

We welcome Dr Aviv Yuniar Rahman from Universitas Widyagama in Indonesia as the new Associate Editor for Industry Case Studies.

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