An artificial intelligence strategy for the South Australian Government

DISCUSSION PAPER

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OFFICE FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the state's first peoples, nations and Traditional Owners of South Australian land and waters. We recognise that their unique cultural heritage, customs, spiritual beliefs and relationship with the land are of ongoing importance today, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging leaders of the future.

TREASURER'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present this discussion paper on an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy for the South Australian government.

This paper is intended to stimulate discussion to inform a comprehensive long-term AI Strategy by identifying opportunities, solutions, and challenges that will help the South Australian public sector reduce administrative burdens, improve forecasting and free up resources to focus on what matters most: serving the people of South Australia.

Through this consultation, we want to hear from as many stakeholders as possible, including the views of everyday South Australians and industry experts.

We welcome the views of all interested parties to help us co-design the state's AI Strategy in an informed way that keeps us at the forefront of AI adoption and ensures our state's public sector remains efficient, effective and responsible in a rapidly changing world.

As Treasurer, I am committed to ensuring that every public dollar delivers measurable public benefit. AI has a significant role to play in optimising government operations, delivering better value for taxpayers and strengthening the state's economic resilience.

I encourage all South Australians to contribute to this important consultation and help us build a smarter, more efficient government for generations to come.

Hon Tom Koutsantonis MP
Treasurer

"I am committed to ensuring that every public dollar delivers measurable public benefit"

MINISTER'S FOREWORD

South Australia is setting its sights high: we are developing a whole-of-government AI Strategy to enhance service delivery to the public.

Our vision is purposeful and ambitious. The AI revolution is happening, and we want South Australia's government to be recognised for how it uses AI to improve government services and its operations. But ambition alone won't define our plans: we want to create a future for AI where our use is trusted, accountable and puts serving the South Australian public at its heart.

This consultation is about more than technology; it's about building a strategy that enables a culture of innovation, opportunity and responsibility.

For our strategy to work, we will have to equip our workforce, fostering collaboration with industry and academia to upskill our people and give them the confidence to seize on the opportunities that AI offers.

It isn't always possible to know what AI can do for South Australia – but we will embrace the changes that will make a positive difference to everyday life. Breakthroughs in adoption and implementation here will give our scientists, teachers, health professionals, police and other public servants more job satisfaction as they deliver world-class, people-focused services for South Australia.

We welcome your contributions. Your insights and feedback will help to shape a strategy that improves the lives of South Australians and creates a future where AI empowers government to deliver.

Michael Brown MP
Assistant Minister for Artificial Intelligence (AI)

"We want to create a future for AI where our use is trusted, accountable and puts serving the South Australian public at its heart."

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE AI STRATEGY

Purpose

The South Australian Government is creating a strategy for how it will use AI to improve its work and the services it provides to the community. The goal is to make government services smarter, faster, easier and safer for everyone in South Australia.

To make sure the strategy is effective, the State Government wants to hear from a wide range of people, including the general public, businesses, and universities.

Scope

This strategy will:

- Set a long-term vision for how government will use AI to improve its work and services.
- Identify key areas where AI can help, such as making tasks easier or making services more user-friendly.
- Explain how the government will make sure its staff have the right skills, access to secure AI tools, and use AI in safe, ethical, and effective ways.

The strategy will not cover local councils or the federal government. It also does not address topics like investment in AI, sustainability or future workforce needs beyond the public sector.

Why an AI strategy?

A strategy helps the government focus its efforts, set clear goals, and organise its large workforce. It acts as a roadmap for success, helping everyone work towards the same vision.

How to be involved

The State Government is consulting widely to shape this strategy.

If you are a member of the public, business, or university, you can get involved by reading this paper and answering the discussion questions. Your feedback will help shape the final strategy and the actions the government takes.

CASE STUDY

Freeing up teacher time in public education

The public education system in South Australia was an early adopter of AI in schools. In 2025, it introduced a new app that has saved teachers thousands of hours of work.

Determining a student's level of 'Learning English: Achievement and Proficiency' (LEAP) allows a teacher to identify a student's level of understanding and plan targeted strategies to support their language development and progress. The process involves a teacher assessing a text that has been written by a student. It can take on average, about 30 minutes for a teacher to assess one student using the LEAP Levels.

The app can do the same job in less than one minute, representing a significant reduction in workload and increasing accuracy across the system. This ensures a more equitable distribution of funding and support, and allows teachers to focus on using data to improve learning and teaching.

As at the end of the 2025 school year, over 58,000 student writing samples have been assessed, saving 29,206 hours for teachers and $1,722,318 for schools.

A quality check showed that the new app's English proficiency assessments closely matched those done by experienced teachers, with agreement in over 95% of cases. This result confirms the app's high accuracy and reliability.

This use of AI allows educators to dedicate time and focus to learning design that addresses students' specific language goals, and greater support for language development and student progress.

In 2025, the public education system introduced a new app that has saved teachers thousands of hours of work.

WHAT IS AI?

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems that can perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, and making decisions. AI works by combining large amounts of data with fast, iterative algorithms to solve problems, recognise patterns, and generate new insights.

AI has been around for decades. It is used in many products and services we use daily, from search engines and online banking to smartphone assistance, and in our online map platforms.

More recently, the technology has developed into publicly available 'chatbots' that can understand instructions and produce or deliver meaningful content. These tools use data they were trained on to generate new outputs that have similar characteristics.

TAFE SA has developed a free introductory course on AI that is available to all South Australians. Enrol now.

WHY DOES AI MATTER FOR GOVERNMENT?

AI is one of the most important technologies of our time. It's changing the way people, businesses, and governments work all over the world.

For the South Australian Government, AI has the potential to:

- Deliver better services to the community, making it easier for people to get the help or information they need.
- Make work more efficient and productive, so staff can get more done in less time.
- Help government make better decisions, by analysing data and providing evidence for policies.
- Support new ideas, products, and services that can benefit everyone.

But AI isn't perfect. It can make mistakes, especially if the data it learns from is biased, incomplete, or incorrect. AI doesn't have human understanding or common sense, and sometimes it can give answers that are wrong or confusing. It also doesn't know when it's made a mistake.

That's why important decisions should always involve people, especially when fairness, safety, or ethics are involved. The government must use AI carefully, making sure it is safe, secure, and trusted by the community. There are already policies and guidelines in place to help public sector staff use AI responsibly, available at ai.sa.gov.au.

A VISION FOR AI ENABLED GOVERNMENT IN SA

The government's vision is to use AI to make public services smarter, faster, easier and safer for everyone. This means using AI to improve its work, as well as benefiting the community, making government services easier and more personalised.

Public trust is essential. People should feel confident that AI is used responsibly and securely, with strong safeguards in place. The government wants to make sure that as AI is used more widely, it always puts people first and keeps the community's needs at the centre of every decision.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What aspirations or outcomes do you think should be part of the South Australian Government's AI vision?
- How would you define a successful AI-enabled public sector for the community?
- What does trust look like for government in its use of AI in work and services?

KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR AI IN GOVERNMENT IN SA

To achieve its vision, the government will focus on areas where AI can make the biggest difference for its work and the community. These might include:

- **Better service delivery:**

  Using AI to make government services more user-friendly, personalised, and available anytime. For example, chatbots could help people find information or complete tasks online, even outside normal business hours. The goal is to make public services more convenient and accessible for everyone.

- **Efficiency and productivity:**

  Automating repetitive tasks (like data entry or routine paperwork) so staff can focus on improvement initiatives, or work that needs human skills, such as judgement, empathy, or creativity. This means government can do more with its resources and deliver better results for the community.

- **Smarter decisions:**

  Using AI to analyse large amounts of data and help government make better informed policies and decisions. For example, AI can quickly spot trends, better predict outcomes, or help evaluate programs.

- **Community engagement:**

  Exploring ways AI can help the government listen to and respond to the community. This could include tools that analyse public feedback to quickly understand what people think about an issue, or AI features that make services more accessible (like translation or assistive technologies for people with disabilities). The aim is to support two-way communication; helping the public interact with government services more easily, and helping government respond to what it learns from the community.

In all these areas, it's essential that AI is used responsibly. Improvements in service or efficiency must go hand-in-hand with keeping data secure, processes fair, and outcomes transparent.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which areas of government service or operation do you believe would benefit most from AI, and why?
- How could AI improve your experience with public services (for example in health, education, transport, etc.)?
- Are there specific risks or challenges you think the government should focus on in these areas when adopting AI?
- What considerations arise for government in its use of AI in services for Aboriginal South Australians, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people with disability?

WHAT NEEDS TO BE IN PLACE?

Achieving the vision and making progress in the focus areas will require putting the right enablers in place. These enablers are the supporting conditions – people, tools, and rules – that will allow AI to be adopted confidently and effectively across the public sector.

The strategy will outline how the government will build and strengthen these foundations. They may include:

- **Upskilling the workforce:**

  Training staff so they have the skills and confidence to use AI wisely. This means offering training in new tools, encouraging a culture of innovation, and making sure AI is seen as a tool to help, not replace, public sector employees. It's also important to attract and keep people with digital and data skills, and to help current staff feel comfortable working with AI.

- **Building trusted technology:**

  Using secure, reliable AI tools and platforms that protect privacy and data. The government will need technology that meets strict security standards, so people can trust that their information is safe. This might include shared resources, like an 'AI platform' or approved software, that agencies can use knowing they meet safety and privacy requirements.

- **Ensuring ethical use:**

  Having clear rules and oversight to make sure AI is used responsibly and safely and earns the public's trust. This means having strong ethical guidelines, making sure AI decisions are explainable and free from bias, protecting human rights and privacy, and always keeping a "human in the loop" for important decisions. By addressing risks—like errors or unintended biases—the government aims to use AI in a way that is safe, transparent, and accountable.

- **Establishing good governance:**

  Setting up leadership and coordination to guide AI projects, share knowledge, and keep everything on track. This includes clear governance structures (who is responsible for what), collaboration across agencies, and possibly advisory groups with industry and academic experts. Oversight bodies may monitor AI projects and outcomes, making sure they align with the strategy's goals and public expectations. Policies or laws may be updated if needed to support innovation while keeping the public safe.

These supports will help the government use AI in ways that truly benefit the community. They are the foundations that will let promising AI ideas grow into real improvements in services.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you think the public sector workforce needs in order to confidently use AI in their jobs (e.g. training, guidelines, cultural change)?
- What considerations should guide the government's choice of AI technologies or platforms (for example, privacy features, local expertise, open-source vs proprietary tools)?
- In your view, what safeguards are most important to ensure AI is used ethically and safely in government?
- How should the government involve the community, industry, and experts in governing AI and keeping its use accountable?

WHAT NEXT?

- Decide which questions you want to answer.
- Navigate to YourSAy.sa.gov.au to provide your answers.
- Your input will help shape the final AI strategy for South Australia, ensuring it reflects the needs and values of the whole community.

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