

# ESTIMATES BRIEF – Hot Issue

## Additional Estimates – February 2026

# AI IN GOVERNMENT

## APS AI Plan

### Subject/Issue

The APS AI Plan sets out initiatives to accelerate the safe, responsible and effective adoption of artificial intelligence across the APS.

### Key facts and figures

- The Minister for Finance announced the AI Plan for the Australian Public Service 2025 (APS AI Plan) on 12 November 2025.
- The APS AI Plan aims to keep pace with the economy-wide transformation taking place and will be iterative.
- The APS AI Plan is funded through a cross-portfolio measure providing \$225.2 million over four years from 2025-26, and \$0.4 million per year ongoing from 2029-30. This funding is allocated to the following agencies:
  - Department of Finance (Finance): \$28.9 million over four years from 2025-26 to establish a central AI Delivery and Enablement function to take the lead in accelerating the uptake of safe and effective AI and support the delivery of the APS AI Plan.
  - Digital Transformation Agency (DTA): \$7.7 million over four years from 2025-26 to strengthen AI governance functions and establish an AI Review Committee to provide expert advice on high-risk government AI use cases.
  - Australian Public Service Commission and DTA: \$22.1 million over four years from 2025-26 (and \$0.4 million per year ongoing) to deliver fundamental AI capability building activities and deliver a coordinated workforce planning initiative to help agencies manage AI-driven changes in job design, skills and mobility.
  - Finance and DTA: \$166.4 million over three years from 2025-26 to expand the GovAI platform and design, build and pilot a secure, AI assistant (GovAI Chat).
- Funding is not allocated by pillar, as the three pillars operate as overarching themes for cross-cutting initiatives, rather discrete activities.

### Key points

- The APS AI Plan will improve government service delivery and public sector productivity, while ensuring AI use is ethical, safe and transparent.

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- The APS AI Plan will drive responsible AI adoption through 15 practical initiatives anchored on three pillars:
  - **Trust:** Building confidence through transparency, ethical use, and strong governance.
  - **People:** Uplifting capability across the APS for safe and effective use of AI, while recognising the impact change has on people.
  - **Tools:** Expanding access to secure, fit-for-purpose AI technologies.
- **Key initiatives** of the APS AI Plan include:
  - Finance's **AI Delivery and Enablement (AIDE)** division is responsible for driving the delivery of the APS AI Plan, working to address common barriers and uncertainties and spread high value uses.
    - The division commenced in Finance on 12 January 2026 and is currently ramping up.
  - **Expanding the GovAI platform**, providing APS staff with secure AI tools up to PROTECTED classification on a common platform.
  - **Mandatory foundational AI training** for all staff, delivered through the APS Academy, to ensure staff are equipped to leverage tools safely and responsibly.
  - **Staff capability building and workforce planning** to manage AI-driven changes in job design, skills, and mobility.
  - A **Chief AI Officer** in every agency by July 2026 to drive the necessary transformation and change management, complementing existing AI Accountable Officials to ensure the change is balanced with appropriate risk controls, governance, and oversight.
  - An **AI Review Committee** in the Digital Transformation Agency to provide expert, non-binding advice on high-risk government uses.
  - Requirement for **workplace consultation** with staff and unions to ensure workers are part of the change process and support orderly, fair AI adoption.

*Accountability and clear standards for external service providers*

- Human decision-makers, not AI, will remain accountable for government decisions, in accordance with applicable laws and relevant policies.
- Suppliers are now required to advise of any planned use of AI in the delivery of services when responding to requests for quotes.

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- Finance is updating the Commonwealth Contracting Suite to clearly state consultants and contractors remain fully responsible for services they deliver, regardless of whether generative AI was used in development. This is expected to complete by the end of March 2026.

### *Chief AI Officers (CAIO) and the role of leadership*

- Agencies are required to appoint a CAIO by July 2026. Finance released an information pack in December 2025 to guide agencies on their selection of CAIOs. They will be existing senior leaders who will lead the transformation and change management within their agencies.
- Dr Paul Hubbard, acting head of the AIDE division, is the interim Finance CAIO.

### *AI Review Committee and its functions*

- The AI Review Committee will have a high-level strategic risk function to enhance whole-of-government risk and compliance oversight and ensure responsible deployment of AI across the APS.
- The Committee will comprise experts from across the APS. It will be operated by the DTA, as part of its policy-setting role and responsibility for compliance with the *Policy for Responsible Use of AI in government*.
- The Committee will provide expert advice on higher risk uses of AI. It will ensure decisions around sensitive or complex AI deployments are grounded in cross-disciplinary scrutiny, consider diverse voices, and uphold government AI safety.
- The Committee may also conduct deep dives into emerging AI risks and ethics issues, to support early identification of risks and proactive risk mitigation guidance to agencies, including on appropriate remedies.

### *Data integration and management*

- Agencies are responsible for uplifting their data capabilities, which will in turn support AI adoption. Finance, through AIDE, will assist this.

### *Employment and staff consultation*

- The Government has no intention of using AI to remove jobs – it's about uplifting the quality and capability of the public service and the delivery of outcomes for Australians.

**AI IN GOVERNMENT****Background**

On 12 November, the Minister for Finance announced the APS AI Plan in the Annual Statement on APS Reform. The plan was developed by Finance, the DTA, the APSC, the Department of Industry, Science, and Resources, and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, in consultation with the broader APS.

**Supporting information****Questions on Notice**

- QoNs F262. AI delivery and enablement. 29 January 2026
- QoNs F291. Chief AI officers. 29 January 2026
- QoNs F293. Trust initiatives. 29 January 2026
- QoNs F295. Productivity Gains. 29 January 2026
- QoNs F300. AI strategic communication initiatives. 29 January 2026
- QoNs F305. APS AI Plan 2025. 29 January 2026

**Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests**

- Finance FOI request 25-26/039. Request from the Guardian for the AI Plan document distributed to public service employees and related documents, between 1 July and 15 July. The requested information was released on 19 September 2025.
- Finance FOI request 25-26/062. Request from the Guardian for the draft and final versions of the AI Plan document distributed to employees in the public service between 1 July and 19 July.

**Recent Ministerial Comments**

- Nil

**Relevant Media Reporting**

- [How Home Affairs and DVA are using GovAI](#), Dan Holmes, The Mandarin, 19 August 2025
- [Economic Reform Roundtable outcomes: Jim Chalmers tasks ministers with 10 changes](#), Michael Read, AFR, 21 August 2025
- [Labor to launch ChatGPT-style app in major public sector AI push](#), Ronald Mizen, AFR, 12 November 2025
- [Gallagher unveils Finance's AI central support squad](#), Melissa Coade, The Mandarin, 12 November 2025
- [Federal chief AI officer roles set to go to existing APS staffers - iTnews](#), Andrew Colley, iTnews, 16 December 2025

**Date sent to MO:** 20/01/2026  
**Cleared by (SES):** Dr Paul Hubbard  
**Telephone No:** s22  
**Group/Division:** Commercial Group / AI Delivery and Enablement Division  
**Contact Officer:** s22  
**Telephone No:** s22  
**Consultation:** Digital Transformation Agency, Australian Public Service Commission  
**PDR Number:** SB26-000027