

ESTIMATES BRIEF – Hot Issue

Additional Estimates – February 2026

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GovAI

Subject/Issue

What is GovAI is and how will it support APS capability building across the APS.

Key facts and figures

- GovAI is the APS’s whole-of-government AI service, supporting safe, secure and consistent use of AI across Commonwealth entities.
- GovAI is transitioning from an open trial to a managed whole-of-government service that provides safe, consistent and scalable AI capability across the APS.
- GovAI builds APS capability by providing shared training, common tools, secure infrastructure and practical AI solutions that allow agencies to safely learn, trial and apply generative AI.
- GovAI provides services through four core capability areas:
 - **GovAI User Resources:** provides training, guidance and practical examples that build foundational generative AI capability across the APS.
 - **GovAI Apps Catalogue:** supports agencies to adopt AI solutions without needing specialist technical skills.
 - **GovAI Tech Solutions:** reduces duplication and accelerates safe adoption by providing reusable compliant components.
 - **GovAI Foundations:** provides the secure environment agencies require to confidently experiment and deploy AI.
- GovAI supports the “tools” pillar of the AI Plan for the APS (2025) announced by the Minister for Finance on 12 November 2025.
- GovAI uses a technology-agnostic approach to avoid vendor lock-in and enable safe integration of multiple AI tools and models.
- Shared tech solutions are being developed to support both centrally hosted and agency-led AI applications, reducing fragmentation and speeding up safe adoption. Early demonstrations include:
 - AI Procurement Policy Assistant
 - Grants Assistant
 - FOI Redaction Tool

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- **GovAI Chat** will be designed, developed and piloted as the APS's secure generative AI assistant, with on-shore processing, APS-controlled data governance and auditable responses.
- GovAI Chat will begin trials from April 2026 and will give up to 5,000 APS users hands-on experience using secure generative AI, supporting practical capability building and agency readiness for scaled APS-wide adoption.
 - GovAI Chat will expand up to 20,000 users from July.
- Through MYEFO 2025-26, Government agreed to fund GovAI and GovAI Chat for an overall total of \$166.1m.
 - \$28.2 million to fund the foundation phase of the GovAI platform and to trial GovAI Chat.
 - The expansion phase (November 2026 – June 2028) has an indicative cost of \$137.9 million. This funding is held in the Contingency Reserve. Release of these funds is subject to a business case demonstrating value for money, alignment with Government priorities, and clear, costed expansion options.
- MYEFO 2025–26 included funding to continue GovAI's transition to a managed service and support the staged development and piloting of GovAI Chat, including the Alpha and early shared technical capabilities.
- APS engagement since the open trial announcement on 31 July 2025 includes:
 - 22,000+ active users and 35,000+ site visits
 - 2,600+ users engaging with training courses
 - 1,700+ contributors or users of the use case library
 - 3,100+ accessing the knowledge hub
- Sentiment is consistently positive, with agencies recognising GovAI as a safe, federated platform that supports experimentation, capability-building and cross-agency collaboration.

Key points

- GovAI delivers four core capability areas: user resources, an apps catalogue, shared tech solutions, and foundational secure infrastructure.
- A managed service is being established following a successful open trial that has seen strong APS engagement.

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Background

- GovAI is a whole-of-government initiative led by Finance to accelerate safe, secure and scalable adoption of generative AI across the APS.
- On 23 April 2024, the Minister for Finance agreed to a limited pilot of a whole-of-government AI platform.
- A closed beta trial involving 50 agencies ran from January to July 2025, followed by an open trial announced on 31 July 2025 at the AI in Government Showcase.
- MYEFO 2025–26 funding supports the ongoing transition to a managed service and continuation of staged development of GovAI Chat.

Supporting information**Questions on Notice**

- QoN F298. GovAI: Centrally hosted AI services. Supplementary Budget Estimates 25-26, Finance Portfolio 1-2 December 2025. Tabling date: 29 January 2026
- QoN F294. Appendix A: GovAI Chat. Supplementary Budget Estimates 25-26, Finance Portfolio 1-2 December 2025. Tabling date: 29 January 2026

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- **Finance reference FOI 25-26/018** seeks portfolio agencies' QTBs for sitting days from 23 to 31 July 2025. Among those are 2 GovAI QTBs that have no sensitivities now that the closed trial period has concluded.
- **Treasury reference FOI 4007** seeks documents and correspondence for Secretary Wilkinson regarding Open AI from 1 May to 30 June 2025. Among those are EB papers. Given sensitivities and deliberative nature of documents sourced, Finance is seeking exemption/redaction in advice to Treasury.

Recent Ministerial Comments

- "the goal is for every public servant to have access to secure, supportive generative AI directly from their desktop or laptop through the GovAI platform, and through the staged development of GovAI Chat." - Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Government Services
<https://www.katygallagher.com.au/media-centre/speeches/launch-of-the-ai-plan-for-the-australian-public-service/>

Relevant Media Reporting

- <https://www.govai.gov.au/blog/aide-and-govai-moving-experimentation-impact-across-aps>, Matt Yannopoulos PSM, Secretary, Department of Finance
- [All public servants to get access to in-house AI chatbot under govt plan](#), Brittney Levinson, Canberra times, 12 November 2025
- [Labour to launch chatGPT style app in major government AI push](#), Ronald Mizen, AFR, 12 November 2025

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- [Microsoft deception prosecution collides with new procurement rules](#), Julian Bajkowski, 28 October 2025
- [Veterans' Affairs trials AI-enabled search](#), Eleanor Dickinson, iTnews, 10 September 2025
- [Veterans' Affairs becomes first Australian federal agency to publicly trial AI search](#), Daniel Croft, Cyber Daily, 10 September 2025
- [Finance leaves GovAI door ajar to sovereign models](#), Justin Hendry, Innovation Aus.com, 8 September 2025
- [Electronic Frontiers Australia raises concerns over ChatGPT use in the public service](#), David Hollingworth, Cyber Daily, 5 September 2025
- [AI and trust: The next grand challenge for the APS is already underway](#), Shirley Yau, The Mandarin, 9 September 2025
- [How Home Affairs and DVA are using GovAI](#), Dan Holmes, The Mandarin, 19 August 2025
- [Govt launches public sector AI tool amid productivity push](#), Justin Hendry, InnovationAus.com, 30 July 2025

Date sent to MO: 27/01/2026

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Consultation: Extensive consultation and co-design activities have been undertaken throughout the design and closed trial phases and continue in the open trial phase. Sentiment across the APS towards GovAI and GovAI Chat is strongly positive, with widespread support for their strategic value, practical utility, and collaborative design.

PDR Number: SB26-000020