

Wednesday, 15 July 2026

Unions welcome PM's AI intervention

Australian Unions have welcomed the Prime Minister's creation of a new Office of AI within his department to develop a coordinated approach to dealing with the impacts of AI.

Unions also support new Australian Standards for AI, a single regulatory framework that will develop mandatory requirements for large AI data centres.

The new Australian Standards for AI will provide a mechanism to keep watch over AI impacts, create secure jobs and build sovereign AI capability here.

The shift is a positive sign the Albanese Government is planning a more active approach in how and where AI is made, to ensure we have our own capability, and are not the last link in the digital supply chain. Unions strongly support the Government's efforts to ensure the creation of good jobs now and in the future.

The new standards also raise the bar for big tech multinationals seeking to invest and build data centres through the development of a more regulated approach to tech company investment.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary, Sally McManus:

"Australians don't trust AI because of the lack of clear benefit for working people. We have had big promises, but so far, no guarantee that any benefits will be shared with workers.

"Unions don't want to veto technology use, only to veto the harm it could cause.

"Developers of the tech have stolen creative works and shown no regard for our values. Too many big employers have introduced AI into workplaces without transparency and used it to justify slashing jobs and undermining work conditions. Australians are right to demand greater protections.

"It's good the Government is taking a more active role in AI policy and is willing to take action to ensure that it benefits Australians.

"We welcome the PM's strong stance against the theft of creative works and the Government's consistent refusal to give big tech an exemption from having to pay for the copyrighted content they use.

"The proposed Australian Standards for AI is also an important first step in regulating AI use when it comes to data centres. Data centres should pay their own way, and building data centres should not result in higher power bills for working people.

"Australian Unions have called for the Government's data centre expectations to be mandatory – and moving in that direction is a win for workers.

"AI is a technology that will affect every industry and workplace, and unions have, for years, called for cross-Government coordination of the policy response. The Office of AI will now do that."

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