DEMOCRACY COUNTS
POWERED BY MCKINNON

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Government plan shows artificial intelligence is not ungovernable

11.11.26

The Australian government's latest plans for the regulation of artificial intelligence sends a strong signal that AI can be deployed in ways that benefit everyday people, not just tech companies.

Democracy Counts, an alliance of 65 organisations looking to strengthen democracy in Australia, welcomes the creation of an AI safety regulator and the possibility of AI companies being made criminally responsible for failure to prevent harm.

The government's announcement followed an OpenAI agent's hack of Australian Medicare systems in June. It comes amidst increasing concern about politically-motivated deepfakes, "nudify" apps, and the social and psychological impact of AI companions on children and young people.

Democracy Counts Director Tom Mooney said the rise of AI had serious implications for democracy.

"We're already seeing AI-generated deepfake videos of politicians and commentators spread for political as well as financial gain, as part of scams or to rack up video views," Mr Mooney said.

"The manipulation of elections, including by foreign actors, has always been a threat, but AI puts an extremely powerful new tool in the hands of those who seek to undermine our democracy.

"There is often a fatalism about the negative impacts of AI, as if it is an unstoppable force we cannot control. But that narrative only serves the tech companies that are currently profiting off a lack of safeguards.

"The Australian government's announcement is significant because it recognises AI is not ungovernable, and with the right guardrails it can be harnessed for the public good."

Democracy Counts recently convened a roundtable of experts in national security, electoral integrity and digital rights, with a roadmap on democracy and AI to be released this month.

DEMOCRACY COUNTS
POWERED BY MCKINNON

“We look forward to working with the government on their plans announced this week and helping to shape next steps,” Mr Mooney said.

About Democracy Counts

Democracy Counts is an alliance of organisations and Australians who care about the way democracy functions in Australia. We are calling for common sense reforms to protect our democracy: better civics education, investment in public interest journalism, political donation reform, ending the revolving door between lobbying and politics, and making online platforms better for citizens.

The growing alliance of more than 60 organisations includes the Centre for Public Integrity, Digital Rights Watch, the Local and Independent News Association, and the Alliance for Journalists’ Freedom. Democracy Counts is powered by McKinnon, an independent, non-partisan, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to better governments for a stronger Australia.