

MEDIA RELEASE

From the food in your fridge to national security, further AI-powered hacks are "inevitable" unless companies held accountable

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The warning today from Australia's top cyber intelligence agency that more AI-powered data breaches and service disruptions are inevitable, underscores the need for basic laws and standards for tech companies.

The Australian Signals Directorate's annual cyber threats report, out today, shows a 20 per cent jump in cyber security incidents the agency was required to respond to.

Democracy Counts Director Tom Mooney said while agencies were doing their job well in responding to threats, the onus needed to be put on tech companies to do the right thing in the first place.

"Artificial intelligence is not ungovernable. Australia has a sovereign right to decide how these technologies are used here, and citizens have a democratic right for our leaders to shape the AI transition in a way that puts the public interest before all else," Mr Mooney said.

Recent AI-powered attacks include the hacking of a Medicare system in Australia, and a hack that raised the temperature in supermarket fridges in France, causing a threat to public health.

"Our agencies report that they are working constructively with the companies developing frontier AI, and this presents a real opportunity for Australia to lead," Mr Mooney said.

"The Australian Government needs to ensure companies that develop and deploy AI are accountable to Australians and subject to the law, and we have the opportunity to build a coalition of like-minded countries and tech companies to support establishment of such a regime."

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About Democracy Counts



DEMOCRACY COUNTS

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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.