



SafeAi

Building trust in AI. Unlocking adoption.

AI Roundtable Outcomes Report

On 14 May 2026, Minderoo Foundation convened a roundtable of global experts and leaders in AI safety, governance, economics and national security at Parliament House, Canberra.

The roundtable was attended by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, the Hon. Richard Marles MP; Minister for Industry and Innovation, Senator the Hon. Tim Ayres; and Assistant Minister for Science, Technology and the Digital Economy, the Hon. Dr Andrew Charlton MP, alongside a delegation of Members of Parliament.

This report synthesises the views and discussion of the experts convened on how Australia can maintain agency and capture investment opportunities while building public trust, national resilience and security.

The throughline across the entire discussion was captured in a single phrase: **leverage creates agency, and agency is essential for safe adoption.**



“We have a world class workforce. We have people with the skills and training that can not only contribute to the development of these technologies, but to lead them.”

Roundtable participant

Summary of discussion

AI is rapidly being built into the systems that support Australia's economy, from agriculture to energy, resources and healthcare. The policy challenge is not only what role Australia plays to support adoption but how to ensure AI strengthens economic resilience while building public trust.

The question is becoming more urgent as the capital driving the global compute expansion concentrates rapidly. With the Asia-Pacific region fast becoming the centre of gravity for the global data centre industry, Australia's proximity, stability, land and access to energy supply create a competitive opportunity to attract a share of that investment and scale our domestic capability.

Attracting and holding that investment would give Australian talent the capital to build and deploy advanced AI systems domestically. Geographic ownership of data centres, when combined with appropriate regulatory, contractual, ownership and operational structures, translates into real control. It allows Australia to determine where national data sits, how much compute is reserved for Australian scientists, researchers and industry, and the terms on which global companies operate here. That control is what lets Australian standards on safety, sustainability and fairness be built into the systems.

The investment window is open, but it will not stay that way. Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand are competing aggressively for the same growth opportunities.

Done well this is more than just 'catching a wave' of global investment.

With strong infrastructure, clear regulation and domestic support, Australia can be more than an AI adopter, we can become a supplier of trusted systems, standards and safety services, strengthening sovereign capability at home and meeting demand that is growing globally.

The discussion explored how Australia can build that capability, the trust that unlocks adoption at home and the sovereign infrastructure and testing capacity that could let Australia supply trusted systems abroad.

"Australians don't see a lot of overt governance and regulation of AI. I think it's kind of a rational perspective to say, well, are the risks really being managed? Should we really be getting behind this?"

Roundtable participant

Key emerging themes

Building trust through safeguards

Public trust in AI must be a national policy goal. Australians can see the benefits of AI, but their support depends on visible safeguards and confidence that risks are being managed. Immediate concerns around privacy, scams, child safety and misinformation need practical action. Without trust, adoption slows and productivity gains are not realised.

1

Sovereign capability where it matters

Australia does not need full self-sufficiency across the AI stack. It needs to identify where control matters most and build capability around those points. That includes reducing over-reliance on offshore firms and hyperscalers, managing vendor risk, strengthening domestic regulatory capability and working with like-minded nations to offset dependencies. AI safety, testing and evaluation are areas where Australia can build useful sovereign capability and international influence.

2

Setting Australia up to benefit

AI policy cannot sit in one portfolio. Innovation, regulation, national security, energy, data infrastructure and workforce policy need to be connected through a coherent national strategy. Australia's renewable energy capacity, available land and stable institutions create a real opportunity to attract data centres and investment. If paired with trusted rules, testing capability and clear national priorities, Australia can move beyond adoption and become a supplier of trusted AI systems, standards and safety services.

3

Priority areas

These themes point to seven priority areas raised in discussion. Participants saw the first four build public trust, addressing the immediate concerns of Australians and unlocking adoption in the near term. The remaining three focus on building the infrastructure and capacity required for Australia to develop and supply trusted AI systems at home and abroad.

Building public trust to unlock adoption

These areas respond to what research Australians are concerned about now. Visible progress here delivers benefits in the near term and creates the public trust to unlock adoption.

1. Digital Duty of Care and Platform Accountability

The Federal Government's response to the Online Safety Act review marked significant progress, backing a digital duty of care and stronger penalties. Participants discussed building on the reforms already underway, the digital duty of care and the Scams Prevention Framework's dispute resolution scheme, to ensure Australians would have a civil right of action and platforms are held accountable when duties are breached by large digital platforms, including AI-powered services like chatbots.



2. Continued Privacy Act Reform

Australia's privacy law was largely drafted before the internet, let alone the age of AI, leaving gaps that could be magnified by AI. Participants discussed continued modernisation of the Privacy Act, including a right of erasure, protections against solely automated decision-making and a fair and reasonable use test, as one of the most significant steps available to protect Australians in the age of AI.



3. AI Safety Institute

The role and resourcing of the AI Safety Institute was raised throughout discussions and seen as central to delivering the safety commitments in the National AI Plan. Participants discussed the value of standing it up quickly, and ensuring it has the resources, enforcement capability and clear accountability to operationalise its safety mandate. The sentiment was the Institute requires additional resources to meet the scale and timeline the safety challenge requires.



4. Regulatory Clarity on Model Training

While not specifically on the agenda, participants raised the need for clear and predictable regulatory settings to give local creators and investors alike the confidence to participate as AI develops. Resolving how creative and other content is used to train AI would ensure Australian creators receive a fair share – building trust in AI, while providing the certainty needed to unlock large-scale, responsible international investment.



Priority Areas

Setting Australia up to benefit

These priority areas were discussed as foundations for Australia to capture the opportunities AI offers. Participants saw them as worth pursuing now, with benefits that build over the longer term. This is the groundwork that could turn Australia from an adopter into a supplier.

5. Build a Data Centre and Compute Strategy Anchored in Energy

Australia's space, renewable energy capacity and political stability make it an attractive destination for data centre investment. Participants discussed the value of attracting training infrastructure and ensuring Australians can access compute built domestically, building sovereign capability that would reduce reliance on offshore hyperscalers and the vendor lock-in and strategic vulnerabilities that can accompany it.

2 3

6. Establish AI Testing and Evaluation Capability

Australia has a strategic opportunity to lead in AI safety, testing and evaluation, building the sovereign capability to ensure AI models align with Australian values and laws before deployment, particularly in high-risk sectors such as healthcare, finance, energy and critical infrastructure. Participants discussed the value of developing this as a high-value capability with strong international demand, which would help grow the technical workforce and create economic and employment opportunities into the future.

2 3

7. Lead AI Governance in the Indo-Pacific

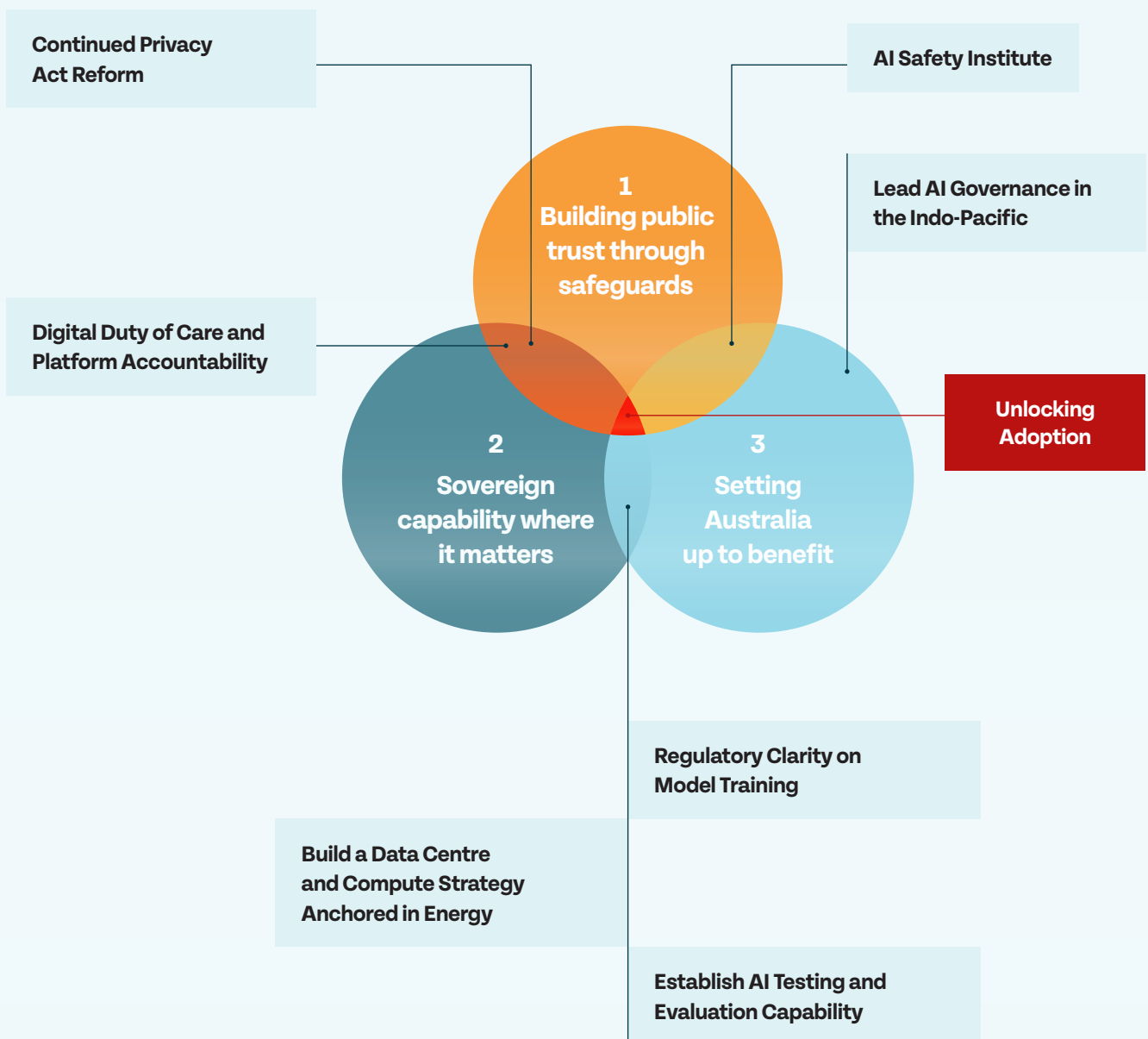
As a middle power, Australia is well placed to be a credible leader on AI safety in the Indo-Pacific. Participants discussed how the Government's Strategy for International Engagement on AI could support a coordinated position across government, industry and civil society, on issues including safety standards, compute access and exportable assurance frameworks. This would strengthen Australia's influence in forums such as the G20 and the International Network of AI Safety Institutes, helping shape trusted approaches to global AI governance, including endorsing the international AI Treaty on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

3

Australia does not need to win the AI race outright. It needs to win the right parts of it. An Australian AI policy that advances the interests, values and advantages of our nation. The AI Roundtable made clear that leverage, not size, is what determines agency.

With the right regulatory settings, sovereign infrastructure and a government willing to move at the pace the moment demands, Australia can be a trusted, exportable model for how democracies adopt AI safely.

Connecting the themes to the areas



Attendees

The Hon. Richard Marles MP	Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, Minister for Defence
Senator the Hon. Tim Ayres MP	Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science
The Hon. Dr Andrew Charlton MP	Assistant Minister for Science, Technology and the Digital Economy
Prof. Nicholas (Nick) Davis	Roundtable Facilitator & Co-Director, UTS, Human Technology Institute
Patrick Baker	Group Director, Bayside Health
Jasmine Bamford	Senior Advisor, Advocacy, Minderoo Foundation
Sam Calabrese	Director, Communications & Campaigns, Minderoo Foundation
Lucy Carlsen	Director, Emerging AI Risks, in the Technology & Digital Policy Division of the Department of Industry, Science and Resources
Tim Carton	Senior Advisor, Policy & Government Relations, CDC Data Centre
Prof. Sarah Erfani	School of Computing and Information Systems, University of Melbourne
Prof. Nicole Gillespie	Professor of Management, University of Melbourne & KPMG Chair of Organisational Trust
Dr Miah Hammond-Errey	CEO, Strat Futures
Prof. Greg Kaplan	Co-founder and Director, e61 Institute
Prof. Ian Langford	Executive Director, Security & Defence PLuS Alliance, UNSW
Peter Lee	Partner, Simmons & Simmons
Nicolas (Nico) Mialhe	Co-Founder & Co-Chair, AI Safety Connect
John Munnely	Chief Digital Officer, KPMG
Michelle Park	Senior Advisor, Existential Threats, Minderoo Foundation
Shervin Rafizadeh	Chief of Staff, Dr Andrew Charlton MP
Prof. Marc Rotenberg	Founder & President, Center for AI and Digital Policy
Prof. Tim Rutherford	Head of Existential Threats, Minderoo Foundation
Prof. Edward (Ed) Santow	Co-director, UTS, Human Tech Institute
Tyson Sara	CEO and Chief Strategist, CMAX Advisory
Prof. Rod Sims AO	Enterprise Professor, Melbourne Institute for Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne
Johanna Weaver	Executive Director & Co-founder, Tech Policy Design Institute
Simon Writer PSM	Acting Deputy Secretary for Science & Technology Group, Dept of Industry, Science & Resources