

## Media Release

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### **St Vincent's warns Australia risks losing its health AI future without urgent action**

St Vincent's has called on the Australian Government to act quickly to protect and develop Australia's sovereign healthcare AI capability, warning the nation risks becoming dependent on overseas technology providers despite its valuable health data assets.

In its submission to the [Australian Government's consultation on AI standards and frontier AI infrastructure](#), St Vincent's has called for health and aged care to be treated as priority sectors in the nation's first AI standards, warning that public trust, patient safety and Australia's future health innovation capability depend on getting the regulatory settings right from the outset.

The national health and aged care services provider (eg: St Vincent's Hospital Sydney and Melbourne), said Australia could be a global leader in health and aged care AI, if governments prioritise investment, procurement, and policy settings that support local development and build patient trust.

St Vincent's warned that without intervention, Australia could become dependent on AI technologies developed overseas, despite having internationally significant health datasets, world-class clinical expertise, and strong public trust in healthcare institutions. St Vincent's Chief Medical Officer, Dr Chris Robinson, said Australia has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to redesign health and aged care, and governments should use procurement policies, investment mechanisms and research partnerships to accelerate both local AI innovation and system-wide transformation.

"Just as electricity transformed industries in the early 20th century, AI has the potential to fundamentally reshape how health and aged care are delivered," said Dr Robinson.

"By combining technology with the expertise of clinicians, we can reimagine what accessible, high-quality care looks like for all Australians, whether that's care provided in hospitals, community settings or home. Australia should be ambitious, building on areas where we already have internationally recognised strengths to lead the next generation of healthcare innovation."

He said that public-interest obligations should be placed on companies developing AI in Australia, with contributions directed towards health and aged care research, particularly projects supporting people who experience poorer health outcomes.

"Australia has a closing window of opportunity to secure a role in AI development and provision as it becomes integral to health and aged care," said Dr Robinson.

"Healthcare is one of the areas that offers the strongest opportunities because of a long running universal healthcare system with national programs and population datasets.

"How we approach our decision-making around these opportunities matters. The real choice Australian governments, agencies, and businesses have is to 'build or buy'.

"The 'build' path enables the development of local capability and superior performance utilising Australia's own population health data.

“The ‘buy’ path – buying into overseas AI health models – risks hollowing out local capability and creating dependency on foreign companies.”

The St Vincent’s submission also calls for measures to ensure the benefits of AI are shared across the community rather than concentrated among those who already have the greatest access to healthcare.

"Left solely to market forces, AI investment will flow to areas delivering the greatest commercial return, not necessarily where Australians need it most," said Dr Robinson.

“There are also risks that the benefits of AI developments in healthcare flow first to people who are already healthy, well-off and digitally confident, and that people who find healthcare hardest to reach will not be included in system design.

“Research contributions should prioritise people who are most at risk, but often overlooked by traditional healthcare settings, such as people experiencing homelessness, or people living with complex health conditions. We recommend setting parameters which encourage innovation that doesn't leave people behind, and which doesn't simply entrench existing commercial interests.

"Australia has an opportunity to become a global leader in responsible healthcare AI, but that opportunity will not remain open indefinitely.

"The decisions governments make today about data, infrastructure, procurement and research investment will determine whether Australia helps build the next generation of healthcare AI or simply imports it from elsewhere," said Dr Robinson.

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