

Will the government pass laws to stop Australia supporting AI tech linked to atrocities?

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Australia must only fund and contribute to technology that upholds the dignity and safety of human beings, not enabling atrocities.

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is giving a major speech at the National Press Club on Australia's guardrails for AI. There is one big question he needs to answer.

Will his government stop Australia from paying for, or helping to build, AI technology that could be used to help carry out war crimes or genocide? Or technology that is developed through 'testing' by Israel on Palestinian civilians?

Right now, Australia has no clear rule that says no to this. Our trade and customs laws are silent on it, and we are asked to 'trust' the government rather than have them set clear rules.

Australia also has no law requiring large companies to disclose the truth about genocide risk in their value chains. We need legal pathways to hold those companies to account.

Meanwhile, the Australian Defence Force and AUSTRAC (the agency that tracks money and crime) have signed deals worth many millions of dollars. These deals are with a technology company called Palantir, which has close ties to US President Donald Trump and the Israeli military.

Many other countries (Switzerland, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark) have already walked away from deals with this same company. They did so because of data sovereignty and national security concerns.

There is also a new law moving through the United States Congress. It is expected to pass this month. This law would integrate the US and Israeli defence industries, including AI tech. That means the US could support Israel's military without calling it "aid."

If this happens, Australia would automatically be pulled into the same industrial base as Israel. Our Defence Minister Richard Marles says we already have a "seamless industrial base" with the US, thanks to AUKUS reforms since 2022. AUKUS Pillar II includes AI tech.

We cannot profit from people's suffering. That is simply not an option for a multicultural country.

With a legal framework that reflects the values we all share, everyone, no matter who they are, can be treated equally and feel a sense of belonging and trust.