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Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Briefing

APEC 2026 — Digital and AI Ministerial Meeting

The 12th APEC Telecommunications and Information Ministerial Meeting (TELMIN12)
23 to 24 July 2026 (DMM/TELMIN12)

s 22(1)(a)(ii) – this section, together with the following pages (2-6) are out of scope and have been removed

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Australia's membership in APEC

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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~~OFFICIAL: SENSITIVE~~***Sensitivities for Australia in TEL***

s 33(a)(iii)

- s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 33(a)(iii)

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- s 33(a)(iii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 33(a)(iii)

s 33(a)(iii)

s 33(a)(iii)

- **Satellite companies** (including Amazon Leo) are interested in APEC TEL to influence satellite policy and economy posture at ITU.
- **Subsea cable resilience and security** s 22(1)(a)(ii) s 33(b) . Australia supports a multi-stakeholder approach where government, industry and academia work cooperatively.
 - In the case of subsea cable management, we consider this is the best way to protect this critical infrastructure and uphold longstanding international rules and norms, particularly those under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and standards of acceptable behaviour.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Australia's current digital/communications policy priorities in APEC TEL***Build APEC membership support for Australia's ITU Council candidacy for the 2027 to 2030 term***

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

- As a member of ITU Council for Region E (Asia and Australasia), we have advocated for all ITU Member States to get the connectivity they need, in particular Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked

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Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Networks in Australia face challenging conditions and natural hazards. We share our experiences with the world and we are committed to finding resilient and secure connectivity solutions together.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Encourage support for Australia’s proposed APEC TEL project, Universal Acceptance Capacity Building: One World, One Internet”

- Australia is overseeing an APEC TEL project, “Universal Acceptance (UA) Capacity Building”, which successfully competed for APEC project funding in the Digital Innovation Sub-Fund during 2025. DITRDSCSA drafted the project’s concept note in consultation with ICANN and the Internet Society.
 - Co-sponsors to the Concept Note are China, Japan and Republic of Korea.
- Implementing UA will ensure that all valid domain names and email addresses, regardless of script, language, or length, can be used by all internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems. UA ensures that every user can fully participate in the internet ecosystem, regardless of their language or the specific characters used in their online identity.

Promote tech neutrality

- Australia advocates for tech neutrality. We suggest that desired outcomes should be achieved by designing enabling policy, legislation and regulations, and not by prescribing specific technologies or vendors to achieve those outcomes.
- Tech neutrality allows for greater innovation, improves risk management, reduces compliance costs and supports continued applicability of policies and regulations in a dynamic technology environment.

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APEC DMM Session 2: Statement — Facilitating Universal and Meaningful Digital Connectivity (including Australia's condemnation of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine)

You will deliver a 5-minute statement at Session 2 (**Facilitating Universal and Meaningful Digital Connectivity**). This is an opportunity to speak to Australia's approach to universal and meaningful connectivity, while emphasising the importance of APEC cooperation and global telecommunications standards/rules to achieve this vision.

s 33(a)(iii)

Approx. 704 words (5 minutes)

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Universal and meaningful connectivity

- I would like to speak to Australia's approach to universal and meaningful connectivity, and to emphasise the importance of global telecommunications standards and rules to realising this vision.

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- Universal and meaningful connectivity requires more than infrastructure alone. It requires services that are reliable, affordable, globally interoperable, resilient and accessible.
- And it requires policies for connecting people and businesses wherever they are—in cities, regions and remote areas.
- To achieve this, Australia has adopted a multi-layered approach.
- Australia has universal telecommunications arrangements in place, including the long-standing **Universal Service Obligation** that supports universal access to fixed voice services.
- This is complemented by more recent arrangement that enable all premises to access high-speed broadband via our investment in the National Broadband Network (NBN). Ongoing investment in this network will see around 94% of premises across Australia's fixed-line footprint able to access multi-gigabit broadband services by the end of 2030.

Addressing limits to mobile coverage

- Recognising that fixed broadband alone is not sufficient, Australia has also invested heavily in expanding mobile coverage through programs such as the:
 - **Mobile Black Spot Program** and
 - **Mobile Network Hardening Program.**
- In communities that have historically experienced connectivity challenges, these investments are improving

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coverage, reliability and network resilience, facilitating public safety, economic development and social participation.

Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites

- For a country of Australia's size and geography, Low Earth Orbit satellites represent an important part of our long-term connectivity strategy.
- Outside NBN Co's fixed-line footprint, NBN Co's new **partnership with Amazon** will use the Amazon LEO satellite network to improve broadband services for some of Australia's most remote homes and businesses.
- And we are progressing the **Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation**, which aims to deliver baseline outdoor mobile coverage across our landmass, including beyond traditional terrestrial mobile networks.

Triple Zero Custodian

- As I mentioned, connectivity must not just be available, it must also be reliable.
- Recent telecommunications outages in Australia have reinforced the critical importance of resilience.
- In response, Australia has established a legislated Triple Zero Custodian to strengthen oversight of our emergency calling system and enhance coordination across network operators, emergency services and regulators.
- We have also invested in a world-leading emergency communications testing facility at the University of

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Technology Sydney, to identify and overcome network and device connectivity failures.

- These reforms recognise that connectivity is important at all times, but essential when people need it most.

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APEC DMM Session 3: Statement — Supporting Digital Inclusion and Digital Skills Improvement

You will deliver a 5-minute statement at Session 3 (Supporting Digital Inclusion and Digital Skills Improvement). This is an opportunity to underscore Australia's commitment to digital inclusion and digital skills uplift, highlight some domestic programs to support online skills and safety, and emphasise the value of APEC collaboration.

Approx. 576 words (4.4 minutes)

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Digital literacy

- Digital skills are becoming increasingly important as artificial intelligence, online platforms and digital services are reshaping workplaces, education and public services.
- As a result, digital literacy can no longer be viewed as a one-off educational achievement. It is now a lifelong requirement.
- We need to equip young people for the jobs of the future, support workers adapting to technological change, and

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ensure older Australians are not excluded from the opportunities created by digital transformation.

- We must also ensure that digital participation is safe.
- We are funding digital literacy programs and online safety education, such as our **eSmart program** and **SmackTalk**. eSmart is aligned with the school curriculum to teach young Australians to recognise and respond to unsafe behaviour online. SmackTalk also delivers information sessions to schools and community groups about online sextortion, for free.
- Older generations are benefitting from the **Be Connected program**, a national initiative that supports Australians aged over 50 to build confidence, digital skills and safety online.
- Online safety and digital skills are essential complements to digital inclusion.
- People after all are more likely to embrace digital technologies if they feel safe using them.
- The Australian Government's approach to AI is focused on ensuring every Australian can participate in, benefit from, and help shape the digital economy.
- Australia's National AI Plan is anchored in 3 goals:
 - Capturing the opportunity
 - Keeping Australians safe, and
 - Spreading the benefits.

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- Spreading the benefits articulates our aim of ensuring that all Australians, regardless of background or location, share the advantages of AI.
- We are supporting this through initiatives such as:
 - The National AI Centre (NAIC), which supports SMEs, not-for-profits, social enterprises and First Nations businesses to adopt AI by providing best-practice guidance and direct engagement.
 - The Digital Solutions program, which provides small businesses tailored advice on how to adopt digital tools, including AI and emerging technologies.

s 22(1)(a)(ii) – this section, together with the following pages (20-37) are out of scope and have been removed

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