

# WEBSITE SUMMARY FOR THE DIGITAL IDENTITY BILL

The '**Trusted Digital Identity Bill 2021**' is a piece of legislation designed to act as the framework for a permanent and expansive 'digital identity' for all Australian citizens.

'Digital Identity' acts as a master ID, joining together previously disconnected government databases containing confidential personal information.

Where the myGov app links things like a driver's licence, passport, Medicare card, and vaccination record – the Digital Identity sets out to link **ALL** government data related to a person. Future iterations of the Digital Identity propose to pair this data against private sector information, such as purchasing records, [to create a rich digital view of a citizen](#).

While Australia lacks the corresponding technological infrastructure to utilise a Digital Identity to its sinister potential (such as China's [spying street lights](#) and billboards), this Bill – whether intentional or accidental – acts as the foundation for a China-style Social Credit System.

Governments do not create large citizen data collection points for no reason. This information is valuable, not only for research purposes, but for political strategies and future policies (such as 'incentivising' green initiatives). Once this information starts being collated by the government against a citizen, it will become like a browser history session that cannot be cleared. While the Bill does not specifically lay out applications for Digital Identity, accompanying documents and industry articles (from banking and insurance sectors) have already begun discussing its potential.

The Trusted Digital Identity Bill 2021 cannot be read or understood as a stand-alone policy. It forms part of an extensive policy framework under the government's **2030 digital goals** laid out in the **Digital Economy Strategy 2030**. According to this strategy (worth **\$1.2 billion** in the 2021-2022 Budget), Australia's Digital Identity is intended to connect into a global digital identity economy.

In other words, the problem is not so much with the technical setup/certifications of the Digital Identity as laid out in the Bill – the issue is with the *intention* of the Digital Identity and that catastrophic change to both privacy and the existing separation between the economy and the government.

What is also of concern is the heightened level of control that the government seeks to wield over the direction of the economy once it transforms into largely digital entity – as stated in its goals – and therefore its motivation for the establishment of a Trusted Digital Identity. The strategy stresses that Digital Identity is aimed at keeping us 'safe' and recovering from a 'Covid economy', but as we have learned, government is poorly equipped to carry out these tasks.

Australians have to ask themselves, do they really want the government acting as an omnipresent policeman standing guard over every commercial transaction?

Should the government be able to prevent a citizen from being 'certified' to purchase items from a private seller (something that is not possible with cash)?

Further, do Australians want to give the government power over the economy to micromanage its future by monitoring, punishing, and rewarding transactions in the same way they have started to interfere in the 'green' energy market?

Also of chief concern is the reason Digital Identity has been created in the first place. The government did not come up with the Trusted Digital Identity on their own to solve the issue of outdated government

databases. As stated by the policymakers in their accompanying documentation, the **Trusted Digital Identity is the brainchild of the World Economic Forum and their global digital identity roadmap.**

The Trusted Digital Identity is required for the Digital Economy Strategy. The following is the intention of the government strategy:

*'The digital economy is key to securing our economic future and recovery from COVID-19. The Digital Economy Strategy targets investments that will underpin improvements in jobs, productivity and make Australia's economy more resilient.'*

Then, from the **Digital Identity Consultation Regulation Impact Statement**, the government quotes **Shaping the Future of Digital Economy and New Value Creation** directly from the World Economic Forum.

*'Further, research conducted by the WEF suggests that digital identity is essential for the growth of the digital economy more broadly encouraging digital, as well as physical engagement with public and private sector services, it has a pivotal role to play in rebooting the global economy in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Digital Identity uniquely positions businesses, the research concluded, to gain and maintain user trust and remain competitive, '...guarantee[ing] the realisation of greater economic potential...and advancing an economy that is more inclusive, equitable and stable for all.'*

And from the linked article:

*'The Platform on Digital Economy and New Value Creation helps companies leverage technology to be agile in the face of disruption and to create the new digitally enabled business models for a new normal – post-COVID, purpose driven, sustainable and inclusive. [...] An estimated 70% of new value created in the economy over the next decade will be based on digitally enabled platform business models. However, 47% of the world's population remain unconnected to the internet.'* - **Shaping the Future of Digital Economy and New Value Creation** and the **Davos Agenda Digital identity Frameworks**.

In **How digital identity can improve lives in a post-COVID-19 world**, the WEF states that, *'To re-boot the global economy and re-connect society physically and virtually in a new reality, people will need to engage physically and digitally with public authorities and businesses.'*

The World Economic Forum is encouraging domestic policymakers to 'move quickly' and build 'trust' with citizens around the secure usage of personal data, which allows extensive third parties to create digital frameworks previously forbidden by privacy laws.

*'But the potential is bigger: the possibility to safely claim who we are will impact how we live and how fast the world economy can recover – alleviating key risks highlighted in World Economic Forum's **COVID-19 Risk Outlooks Report**.'*

The linked Outlooks Report (tied to the Global Risks Report) seeks to **keep the changes made during Covid** rather than encouraging business and society to return to its in-person, normal operation. This is no doubt because the biggest winners under Covid were digital services and banks who profited off an unsustainable economic model almost entirely propped up with public money. To encourage this system would be a catastrophic error.

This report includes the header **'An opportunity to build back better'**, directly connecting the **Liberal Party's Australian Digital Identity to the hated 'build back better' global mantra**. It also forms part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and, littered through the supplementary data, are references and intentions to eventually incorporate the global Digital Identity into Climate Change policy.

*'Despite the grim economic outlook, the solidarity created by the Covid-19 pandemic offers the possibility of investing in building more cohesive, inclusive and equal societies. When it comes to the environmental agenda, the implementation of green stimulus programmes holds the potential to fundamentally change the way economies and industries operate, especially as societal behaviour change may spur more sustainable consumption and mobility habits. For businesses, the opportunity exists to accelerate a transformation towards more sustainable and digital operating models, while enhancing productivity. When it comes to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, technology has demonstrably helped societies manage crisis and provided a window into the benefits of more technology-enhanced ways of learning, working and producing – from telemedicine to logistics to the knowledge economy. There is a potential for a new era of innovation, growth and enhanced technology governance in the service of societal and environmental goals.'*

To be clear, the WEF is the backbone from which the Australian government is drafting Digital Identity policy and the assumptions made by the WEF to justify their recommendations are, frankly, wrong – both historically and logically. To give one example, the need for swift digitisation is based on a prediction that nationalistic tendencies driven by competition for pandemic resources will see countries isolate themselves from the global market and sink into recession. We know from history that nations do the reverse – they expand into trade after traumatic events and the less intervention from global authorities, the better as countries find their economic niches mores quickly.

The Australian government do not challenge any of these assumptions, but rather assumed them as fact with the WEF's recommendations littered throughout the Bill.

Part of this framework is a concept called 'Human-centric digital identities' – which is essentially what the Australian government is attempting to create as a form of 'alleviation from global health risks'. The description of Trusted Digital Identity in the [linked](#) WEF policy is nearly identical to the Australian legislation.

The other WEF reference made is to [Reimagining Digital Identity: A Strategic Imperative](#), which is more of the same except it summarises the other nations creating their own Digital Identities and includes a few worrying insights.

*'Businesses must understand that they will be required to redesign and rethink their relationships with their customers to remain competitive in a changing business landscape. As user expectations change regarding how digital identity is managed, organisations must reposition themselves regarding how they interact with their customers. And the time to act is now. The digital identity revolution has already begun.'*

At which point we can point to the Australian government's Digital Economy roadmap which says:

**'We'll be succeeding when:**

- **The significant majority of Australians over 19 are registered for myGovID or other trusted digital identity.**
- **By 2030 all businesses will be digital businesses. To be a leading digital economy and society in 2030, every business needs to become a digital business.**
- **Businesses can verify the digital identity of customers and suppliers with absolute confidence.**
- **All transaction are electronic, integrated and secure – from registration through to employment, reporting, marketing, banking, accounting and security.**

Which, if you read carefully, attempts to end anonymous cash transactions within the economy under the excuse of ‘progress, efficiency and safety’, removing the essential liberty of customers and businesses to purchase goods and services without heavy-handed oversight.

The recurring theme throughout these documents is that in order to be ‘safe’ and expand after Covid, the government must forge a new digital economy. In reality, a heavily regulated economy is less resilient and slower to recover than an old fashioned chaotic one. This is probably why a black economy in Australia is on the rise (suggested by the staggering increase in physical cash circulation) as individuals seek to recover their jobs outside the inflexible layers of cost and regulation ill-suited to a disaster. The government puts the cash increase down to [pandemic hoarding](#), but it is far more likely that those individuals ‘locked out of the economy’ by state governments are having to find ways to survive. Instead of fixing the environment that has caused this behaviour, the government seeks further regulation to prevent it.

### **What’s in the Trusted Digital Identity Bill:**

The Bill simply introduces itself as, *‘A Bill for an Act to establish the ‘trusted’ Digital Identity system and to provide for the accreditation of entities in relation to digital identity systems generally, and for related purposes.’*

In other words, it creates a Digital Identity, sets out how other digital entities can interact with it, creates code of conduct guidelines, and puts forward some general (but by no means exhaustive) application processes, and lists penalties for failing to comply. The word ‘trusted’ is in the title to represent the ‘trusted’ accreditation process that the Bill sets out for third parties to access citizen data. Finally, the Bill sets out an Oversight Authority to monitor the system.

The vast majority of this Bill deals with the technical nature of accrediting digital businesses to interact with your data. Instead, we wish to ask if the Bill should exist as a concept.

Forgetting the more serious consequences of the Bill, does it actually achieve what it sets out to do? The answer is, ‘no’. Based solely on its primary aims, the Bill is a failure of concept.

There are two stated purposes for the Bill’s existence.

1. Simplify access to clunky government databases for individuals and businesses.
2. Create, stimulate, and shape a ‘Covid-safe’ economy.

Instead of fixing the government’s disjointed, outdated, and woefully error-laden databases, Digital Identity acts as a band-aid.

It creates a brand new central identity and collects information from the same broken databases. Third party applications then talk to the Digital Identity, where all the information is nicely ordered for modern systems. The Digital Identity did not fix the problem – those databases are still heading toward failure. Why not simply spend the billions of dollars allocated to this project to fix the master databases? Or at least fix the databases before using the mess as the foundation for Australia’s largest digital environment...

A good Bill would simplify and reduce government databases, this Bill vastly extends government-held private data into a wide range of accredited domestic and international corporations who can, upon exemption, host data on foreign servers.

This data – crucial to the safety and identity of an individual – is now collated under the Digital Identity where it is shared, used, and hosted by corporate entities for a range of unspecified reasons related to government services, research, and economic practices. The Bill even lists the potential for these services to charge citizens an access fee for their data.

Without Digital Identity	With Digital Identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Register online to create new ABN, register for GST, register for PAYG and register business name <b>15 minutes</b></li> <li>• Post certified documents to Australian Business Register for review and processing <b>105 minutes</b></li> <li>• Login to online business profile and manage who is authorised to access account <b>15 minutes</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Total: 135 minutes (2hrs 15mins)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Register online to create new ABN, register for GST, register for PAYG and register business name <b>15 minutes</b></li> <li>• Login to online business profile and manage who is authorised to access account <b>15 minutes</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Total: 30 minutes</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>Potential time saved is 1 hour 45 minutes. Save up to an additional 4 weeks</b> by not having to wait for identity documents to be manually reviewed and processed.</p> </div>

The main selling point on the Digital Identity website is the time people will save.

Without Digital Identity	With Digital Identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace primary identity document <b>120 minutes</b></li> <li>• Lodge application for disaster assistance <b>30 minutes</b></li> <li>• Replace secondary identity document <b>120 minutes</b></li> <li>• Provide supporting documents for claim <b>60 minutes</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Total: 330 minutes (5hrs 30mins)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lodge application for disaster assistance <b>30 minutes</b></li> <li>• Provide supporting documents for claim <b>60 minutes</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Total: 90 minutes (1hr 30mins)</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>Potential time saved is 4 hours. Save up to an additional 4 weeks</b> by not having to wait for new identity documents to be created and sent before applying for assistance.</p> </div>

These promises are unlikely, given the experience and difficulty with both myGovID (created by the same company given the contract for Digital Identity) and the service trouble experienced with vaccine passport certification – the Trusted Digital Identity will probably take people longer to set up and fix than the total time saved by its existence. The government’s time-saving problems do not factor in any difficulties in service which are not part of the current system. Once passed, Digital Identity will be used as a way to validate transactions in the same way that a Vaccine Passport unlocks access to previously unregulated areas.

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The Bill is careful to insist that its use will remain voluntary, but the [accompanying documentation](#) implies that Digital Identity is a mandatory condition of service in the economy in the same way that vaccine passports are ‘implied’ as mandatory if you wish to continue trading.

*‘Digital Identity will give Australian people and businesses a single, secure way to use government services online. Creating a Digital Identity is like doing a 100-point identification check. It removes the need to visit a shopfront with your identity documents. Digital Identity is already being used by over 2.3 million Australians and 1.2 million businesses to access over 75 government services. Digital Identity ensures personal information is securely encrypted and stored in Australia and no personal information is presented through a double blind system. The proposed new legislation for the Digital Identity system will extend these protections and standards to businesses and state and territory governments who will use the digital identity.’*

And then it sets out this Digital Identity as a government-controlled protection for fraud against private digital transactions:

*'The Trusted Digital Identity Framework sets out the rules for the national digital identity scheme. This Framework will make it easier and safer for people to access online services and provide additional protections against identity crime, which is estimated to cost the economy over \$3.1 billion a year. The Government will progress legislation to enable the rollout of the Framework to the private sector and other governments. The legislation will embed privacy, security and fraud prevention mechanisms to build trust and confidence by those who choose to participate.'*

And finally, from the [Digital Economy Strategy](#):

*A digital economy is characterised by online transactions and engagement – a virtual, paperless and cashless world [...] This means that by 2030:*

- **All businesses are digital businesses**, using e-Commerce tools and new technologies to improve productivity, innovate and generate high-paying jobs.
- **All transactions are electronic, integrated and secure** – from registration through to employment, reporting, marketing, banking, accounting and security.
- Government services will all be easily and safely accessible online, saving people and businesses time and money. Government service delivery will be supported by **better public data availability and sharing** that is used by a highly-skilled public service to deliver more targeted policy and programs.

And for individuals:

- The **significant majority** of Australians over 18 are registered for myGovID or another trusted digital identity.

While not explicitly stated in the Bill, if the government's Digital Economy Strategy by 2030 is aiming for all business transactions to be digital (no cash), and those transactions require the integrated and secure Digital Identification check to validate them – then those who do not partake in the Digital Identity scheme will be effectively locked out of the economy.

The Digital Economy Strategy also states: **'To be a leading digital economy and society in 2030, every business needs to become a digital business.'**