



**MEDIA STATEMENT**

# **Tony Simpson** MLA

## Opposition Spokesperson for Information Technology and Communications

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### **Government must invest in future economic growth**

The Australian Computer Society has warned that Australia faces a shortage of trained IT specialists.

This lack of skilled Information Technology workers could potentially act as a break on economic growth in the future.

Opposition Spokesperson for IT and Communications Tony Simpson has expressed concern that the Labor State Government is not taking this issue seriously enough.

“This is an issue that is vital to the future of WA’s economic growth,” said Mr Simpson.

“Once the commodities boom ends, industries operating in Information and Communications Technologies will be one of the key growth areas of Western Australia’s economy.

“Information and Communications Technologies are not only used by businesses in the hi-tech services industries, but also by some of the cornerstones of WA’s economy, such as mining and agriculture.

“More than 70 per cent of Western Australian farms use a computer for businesses purposes and almost as many use the Internet.

“More than 59 per cent use it for financial purposes and 54 per cent for obtaining weather information.

“The ICT industry is estimated to be worth somewhere between \$10.1 billion and \$17.6 billion, or of a similar size to the combined agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

“This is somewhere between 13.7 per cent and 23.8 per cent of the Gross State Product in 2003-04.

“Government reports have stated that it is directly or indirectly responsible for the employment of between 10 and 17 per cent of the State’s workforce.

“These technologies have been responsible for most of the productivity gains enjoyed by developed economies, such as Australia, over the last decade.

“However, a lack of skilled IT workers could seriously endanger the prospects of future economic growth.

“If they cannot find the workers needed here, ICT businesses will simply move operations overseas.

“If this happens, many of the benefits gained from this sector of the economy will come to a halt.

“The Labor State Government does not value the contributions made to the Western Australian economy by Information and Communications Technologies.

“They have removed Government responsibility for the OpenSource Software Demonstration Centre and threatened to cut funding for the First and Second Click computer training courses. Only maintaining funding due to pressure from the Liberal Party.

“The Carpenter Government has shown only disinterest in WA’s ICT Industry. Usually willing to just copy the policies aired by the Liberal Party or other State Governments.

“The Government must heed the warning from the Australian Computer Society and think seriously about adequately investing in our State’s future.”

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