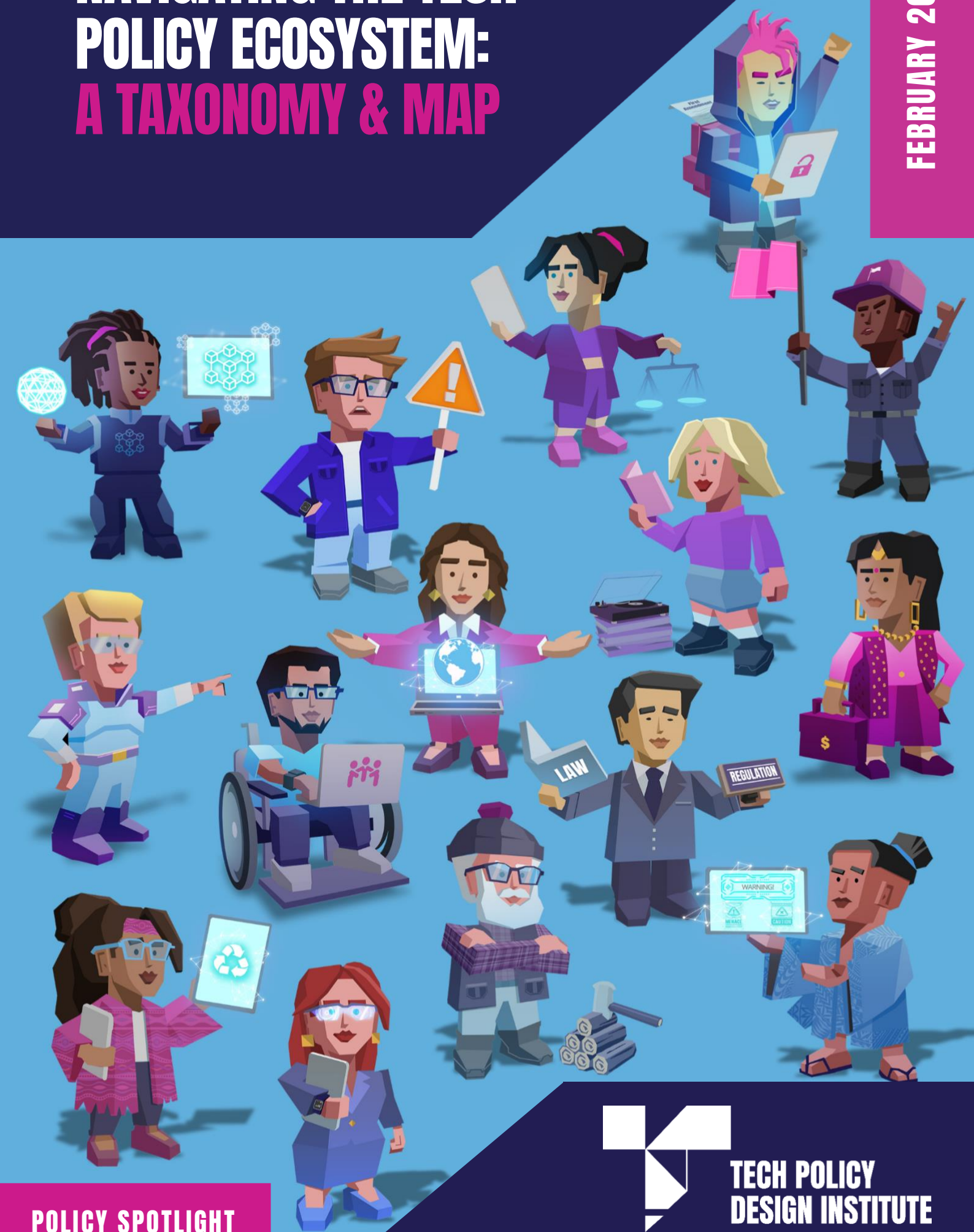
NAVIGATING THE TECH POLICY ECOSYSTEM: A TAXONOMY & MAP

FEBRUARY 2025



POLICY SPOTLIGHT

TECH POLICY DESIGN INSTITUTE

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Based in Canberra, TPDi is an independent, non-partisan think tank committed to advancing best practice technology policy in Australia and globally. TPDi is registered as a not-for-profit with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission. TPDi collaborates with all stakeholders in the tech ecosystem. Our mission is to shape technology for the benefit of humanity through rigorous research, innovative education, public commentary, and community building.

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people who are the Traditional Owners of the land upon which this report was prepared in Canberra, Australia. We pay our respects to their elders past and present.

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FOREWORD

The tech policy landscape is more dynamic and multifaceted than ever before. The number and diversity of stakeholders, the range of competing tech policy perspectives, and the rapid rate of technological change mean understanding, navigating, and influencing the tech policy ecosystem is no easy task.

This report equips stakeholders to find common ground on some of the most pressing issues of our time.

The *Taxonomy of Tech Policy Philosophies* and the *Map of Australian Tech Policy Stakeholders* are practical tools. The Taxonomy demystifies the ideological diversity that shapes tech policy debates, deepening understandings of different perspectives, and providing a shared language for enhanced communication and collaboration. The Map provides a birds-eye view of the Australian ecosystem, enabling better engagement and coordination. These tools are complementary and intended to empower practitioners to navigate the tech ecosystem deftly and with impact.

With the rapid development of transformational technologies such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, green technologies, and quantum computing, our ability to co-design best practice tech policy becomes ever more important.

The art of tech policy is fundamental to modern policymaking. With this report, we contribute important tools to inform, upskill, and empower stakeholders across the tech ecosystem. This is just one part of TPDi's effort to establish tech policy as an international professional discipline.

While there are many causes for concern, we remain hopeful that technology can be a force for good - if we harness the power of policy to shape it. With research-based policy, innovative education, rich public debate, and inclusive community building, there is reason to be optimistic about the positive impact of technology on our future.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Technology intersects with every aspect of modern life and policymaking. The ability to navigate and shape the tech policy ecosystem is an indispensable skill for government, business, civil society, and research leaders alike.

This report provides two critical tools to support practitioners in this important task:

1. The Taxonomy of Tech Policy Philosophies: this framework identifies and defines 15 distinct tech policy philosophies. The Taxonomy offers a structured approach to understanding ideological diversity in tech policy debates. Evidence of these philosophies can be found in most jurisdictions globally. By delineating core philosophies, the Taxonomy equips practitioners to identify their tech policy allies, understand sources of disagreement, and discover opportunities for collaboration.
2. The Map of Australian Tech Policy Stakeholders: this visual and organisational tool demystifies the complex stakeholders across Australia's tech policy ecosystem. It decodes the relationship between various stakeholders, from government entities to civil society. The Map, complemented by an Index of Federal Government tech, digital and cyber responsibilities, empowers practitioners to navigate the Australian tech policy landscape effectively.

This dual approach provides practitioners with a comprehensive understanding of the motivations and relationships across the tech policy ecosystem.

The tools provide stakeholders and researchers with a shared reference point, enabling greater collaboration and coordination, targeted engagements, education and training, and global comparisons.

This report is a contribution to supporting individuals and organisations to master the art of best practice tech policy, a foundational discipline for our future.

INTRODUCTION

Tech policy philosophies

Tech policy, with its diverse philosophies and stakeholders, has a long dynamic history. The question of how societies should embrace or constrain technology has been a recurring theme, shaping debates across centuries. From the Luddites of the 19th century resisting industrial machinery and fighting for workers' rights, to the adoption of early internet networks in the late 20th century, the divisions over technology's role in society are not new. These debates have consistently reflected the broader societal, economic, and political dynamics of their time.

In the digital age, the tech policy landscape has grown increasingly complex. As Robert D. Atkinson observed in his 2010 article for the *Information Technology and Innovation Foundation*, the competing views on tech governance already presented a complex terrain 15 years ago.[1]

Complex and crowded policy landscape

Much has changed since 2010. Major technological, political, and societal shifts have shaped the tech policy ecosystem. The smart-phone revolution gained traction, fundamentally changing consumer digital experiences. The 2013 Snowden revelations brought surveillance and data privacy debates to the fore. Social media transformed the global flow of information and challenged political power structures. Rising geopolitical tensions have underscored the strategic importance of technology. Consumer artificial intelligence products have sparked debates on productivity, creativity, the future of work, and existential risks. Growing concerns about the environmental costs of innovation and the psychological impacts of technology, such as social media's role in mental health, have further reshaped the dynamics of tech policy debates. It has become clear that the era of big tech self-regulation is over, as waves of tech regulation break in jurisdictions around the world.

Governments globally are grappling with how to organise their multi-faceted approach to these diverse technology policy issues. This often results in complex webs of responsibilities across portfolios making it hard for stakeholders, both within and outside of government, to navigate. Australia is no exception.

This report responds to these twin issues with two practical tools for policy practitioners. It expands and updates Atkinson's 2010 taxonomy to define 15 categories of tech policy philosophy. It also presents a detailed stakeholder map of the Australian tech policy landscape, demystifying the relevant actors, their responsibilities and relationships to each other.

With the help of these tools, we hope practitioners can engage and collaborate more effectively to design best practice tech policy that helps to shape technology for the benefit of humanity.

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PART 1: THE TAXONOMY OF TECH POLICY PHILOSOPHIES

What's in a name?

A taxonomy – the practice of categorising and organising things into distinct groups – is a valuable tool for understanding complex systems. Originating in biology, taxonomies have been applied across disciplines to create order, identify relationships, and facilitate analysis.

To navigate the tech policy ecosystem, we need to understand the profile, priorities, and motivations of the diverse range of players on the field. A taxonomy equips stakeholders to navigate an ecosystem that is as ideologically charged as it is multifaceted. To that end, this section presents 15 different philosophies embodied by different tech policy stakeholders.

This Taxonomy is designed to provide an understanding of the ecosystem and equip stakeholders with the shared language to express and navigate different points of view on technology and its impact on society. Categorising and defining the groups equips stakeholders with a shared language through which to identify and articulate which philosophy, or philosophies, is motivating particular position(s).

The Taxonomy is intentionally globalised, offering a framework that is applicable in Australia but also in many jurisdictions around the world.

In reality, of course, individuals and organisations will often embody more than one of these philosophies – on different issues, with different stakeholders, possibly at the same time. The list is not intended to be mutually exclusive or completely exhaustive but provides a foundational picture of the tech policy landscape.

How to use the Taxonomy

The Taxonomy is a tool for tech policy practitioners. It is designed to support:

- Specific tech policy communication: providing a shared language to combat ambiguity and instead articulate the underlying beliefs, motivations, and priorities of an individual, group, or organisation.
- Informed tech policy planning: creating a more detailed understanding of the philosophical starting points of key stakeholders involved in a particular issue to enable more tailored engagement plans for more effective discussions.
- Collaborations between tech policy stakeholders: highlighting the shared beliefs and priorities of different philosophies to help spark constructive – even unexpected – collaboration on tech policy issues.
- Strategic advocacy: advocacy groups can use the Taxonomy to craft targeted campaigns that resonate with specific philosophical clusters, making their messaging more impactful and aligned with stakeholder values.
- Policy benchmarking and evaluation: by mapping policies onto the Taxonomy, practitioners can evaluate whether policies align with the dominant philosophies of key stakeholders or whether adjustments are needed to address gaps and tensions.
- Educational and training tool: training practitioners and researchers in understanding the ideological underpinnings of tech policy debates to build capacity for more nuanced and effective policymaking.
- Global comparison: the Taxonomy can serve as a framework for cross-border dialogue, enabling countries or regions with differing dominant philosophies to identify common ground and harmonise approaches to global tech challenges.

The following Taxonomy of 15 Tech Policy Philosophies is also summarised in Table 1 on page 22.

The Tech Policy Philosophies

Cyber-Libertarians

One of the more well-established categories of the tech policy ecosystem, Cyber Libertarians entered the stage early in the internet age. This anti-establishment group believes that technology, particularly the internet, is a transformative force for individual freedom and innovation. Cyber Libertarians advocate for minimal government intervention. They believe that self-regulation is better suited to drive positive outcomes. Influenced by thinkers like John Perry Barlow, whose 1996 "Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace" envisioned the internet as a realm free from the control of governments, which he described as 'weary giants of flesh and steel'.[2] Instead, this group champions open-source technologies, privacy rights, and freedom of expression. Today, Cyber Libertarians resist not just government surveillance and control, but also that of big tech companies.

Digital Decentralisers

While Cyber Libertarians celebrate individual autonomy broadly, Digital Decentralisers focus on the potential of decentralised technologies, such as blockchain and Web 3.0, to redistribute power and address societal challenges. They believe that decentralisation empowers individuals, enhances transparency, and reduces reliance on centralised institutions that they do not trust, including governments, corporations, and banks. Influenced by concepts like David Chaum's work on cryptography[3] and Satoshi Nakamoto's vision for bitcoin,[4] their advocacy goes beyond pure libertarian de-regulation and instead looks to achieve online order through technologies that boost trust and autonomy. Digital Decentralisers tend to focus on addressing issues like data ownership, financial inclusion, and privacy. Their critics argue this approach fails to account for issues such as governance and scalability, but Digital Decentralisers are committed to using technology to drive structural change.

Techno-Solutionists

Techno-Solutionists are a group inspired by the belief that technology holds the key to solving virtually all societal problems, from climate change to inequality and education. Techno-Solutionists believe we should not restrain the technologically possible but rather facilitate its discovery. Rooted in an unwavering optimism about human ingenuity, they view innovation as the most efficient and effective path to progress. Unlike Digital Decentralisers, who emphasise restructuring systems to decentralise power, Techno-Solutionists often support centralised or proprietary solutions if they promise to deliver rapid, measurable results. Ray Kurzweil's vision of the singularity – when technology transcends human limitations - captures the essence of techno solutionism.[5] Techno-solutionism is sometimes associated with a broader framework called TESCREAL – Transhumanism, Extropianism, Singularitarianism, Cosmism, Rationalism, Effective Altruism and Longtermism, which frames extreme techno-solutionism as a pursuit of radical progress.[6] The high-speed pursuit of neurotechnology can be seen through this lens. Critics of Techno-Solutionists warn that this approach risks reducing complex social and political issues to technological problems with technical fixes.[7]

Free Marketeers

Free Marketeers believe that market forces should determine the direction and pace of technological innovation, arguing that the competitive dynamics of the free-market drive efficiency, productivity, and economic growth. They oppose government intervention and regulation arguing that it stifles innovation, increases costs, and slows progress. Drawing inspiration from free market economists like Milton Friedman,[8] and contemporary proponents such as Peter Theil, Free Marketeers promote the 'California ideology': that unfettered entrepreneurship and innovation are critical engines of societal advancement.[9] The group celebrates the role of private enterprise, arguing that profit incentivises creativity and the bold investments required to drive progress. This group's critics point to inequality, environmental damage, and underinvestment in public goods and safety as the cost of this approach. However, Free Marketeers maintain their philosophy is the best path to economic growth.

Digital Developers

Like Techno-Solutionists, this group sees technology as a positive and critical tool for advancing global social and economic development. They depart from Techno-Solutionists by focusing on underserved and marginalised communities. Digital Developers see access to technology and the internet as a fundamental human right,[10] essential for enabling individuals to participate fully in the modern economy, access education, and engage in civic life. Their primary motivation is to close the digital divide – the gap between the tech haves and have-nots – believing that equitable access to digital tools and infrastructure is key to reducing global inequality. Typified by programs like One Laptop per Child,[11] Digital Developers seek to democratise technology in service of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.[12] Critics sometimes argue that this approach underestimates the complexities of implementation and risks overlooking systemic structural issues, including in political and economic power structures and infrastructure development. They advocate for equity of access and policy frameworks that support connectivity and digital literacy for all.

Global Governors

This group view the opportunities and risks of technology as inherently international, requiring collaboration between countries. For Global Governors, technology transcends borders, with innovations reshaping interconnected economies and societies. They emphasise the importance of international collaboration in research, governance, and trade to unlock the potential of technology and mitigate its risks. They support mechanisms such as cross-border digital trade and international data-sharing frameworks. Global Governors believe that tech issues, such as cyber security or AI governance, demand global solutions underpinned by international norms, standards, and/or agreements. Unlike Techno-Nationalists, who see innovation as national advantage, or Regulatory Pragmatists, who are focused on localised governance frameworks, Global Governors prioritise international cooperation. Global Governors believe existing global governance structures – with nation states at the centre - must be reinforced to maintain global stability and constrain the growing influence of large tech companies. When it comes to domestic regulation, Global Governors call for coordination and interoperability. This philosophy is captured by processes like the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security,[13] or the Internet Governance Forum.[14] Critics argue that global approaches to governance are slow and ineffective, hamstrung by competing interests and power imbalances. However, Global Governors see international cooperation as an in essential ingredient for global stability and the effective governance of global tech companies.

Techno-Evolutionaries

Techno-Evolutionaries believe that big tech companies represent a new kind of global institution, wielding unprecedented power and influence comparable to that of nation states. Techno-Evolutionaries are focused on adjusting to the significant global influence of big tech companies. They argue that the scale, innovation, and reach of these 'Cloud Empires' have redefined traditional boundaries of governance, taking on functions historically associated with states, such as security, maintaining compliance, and controlling critical infrastructure.[15] Like Global Governors, Techno-Evolutionaries argue that existing global governance structures must evolve in response to the growing influence of tech companies. But for Techno-Evolutionaries, companies such as Amazon, Google, Meta, and Microsoft, or Alibaba, ByteDance, and Tencent, are not merely corporations but de facto world leaders, capable of shaping markets, public discourse, and even geopolitics. Elon Musk's recent involvement in European security and US political affairs illustrates this concept. Techno-Evolutionaries contend that the new power dynamic between governments and big tech companies necessitates expanding existing global governance structures to elevate these companies alongside nation states.[16] Critics warn that this approach risks concentrating unchecked power in the hands of unaccountable entities and undermining democratic processes. Meanwhile, Techno-Evolutionaries believe these companies necessitate a pragmatic evolution in global governance, where traditional state structures may no longer suffice.

Techno-Nationalists

Techno-Nationalists consider technological development to be a critical economic and national security imperative.[17] They pursue 'innovation power'[18] – the ability of a nation to lead in critical technologies such as AI, quantum computing, and semiconductors – to maintain a competitive edge against other countries. Thinkers like Eric Schmidt, former CEO of Google, have championed the idea that government and the private sector must collaborate to secure technological leadership. Techno-Nationalists advocate for robust government investment in, and strategic support for, critical technology sectors to maintain a competitive edge, yet are often cautious about overregulation, fearing it could stifle innovation and hinder the ability of national champions to compete effectively on the global stage. Zuckerberg has been known to evoke this philosophy to ward off regulation, saying, 'we can't sit here and assume that because America is today the leader that it will always get to be the leader if we don't innovate'.[19] Critics warn that this mindset risks fostering protectionism and escalating global tensions. However, for Techno-Nationalists, the stakes are existential: the global tech race is not just an economic competition, but a matter of sovereignty and survival in a world increasingly shaped by great power rivalries.

Intentional Innovators

This group is motivated by the pursuit of technology's potential but emphasises that innovation should not come at any cost. Intentional Innovators acknowledge the role of policy and regulation in shaping technology, recognising the need for guardrails to ensure that innovation aligns with ethical, social and environmental priorities. They advocate for an intentional and considered approach to technological development and view technology as a choice that society must make consciously, weighing benefits against risks and long-term consequences. For many Intentional Innovators, this perspective is shaped by a human-rights lens – viewing technology as both a tool to advance civil liberties and socio-economic rights, and a potential source of harm, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised groups. Intentional Innovators draw inspiration from leaders like Ruha Benjamin and Safiya Noble who push back against tech-facilitated discrimination and oppression, and leaders such as Tristan Harris and Rana El Kaliouby, who advocate for the importance of proactively designing more 'humane' technology.[20] Critics argue that this perspective could slow progress or create bureaucratic obstacles, but for Intentional Innovators the risk is too great to adopt a 'move fast and break things' mentality. Instead, they champion progress with purpose, ensuring that technology evolves in line with societal values.

Regulatory Pragmatists

Regulatory Pragmatists reject the notion that digital technologies and the companies behind them are fundamentally novel or exceptional. Unlike Techno-Nationalists and Techno-Evolutionaries, they resist calls for dramatic prioritisation or reimagining governance specifically for technology. Instead, they argue that these technologies should be subject to the same principles and regulatory frameworks that govern other industries. This perspective is underpinned by the belief that existing legal, regulatory, and economic schools of thought – such as competition law, consumer protection, and data privacy – can be effectively adapted and applied to new digital technologies. Figures like Lina Kahn, outgoing Chair of the US Federal Trade Commission, argue that traditional competition principles, applied rigorously, can address the concentration of big tech power without the need to invent new regulatory paradigms.[21] Some critics argue this heavy-handed approach quashes innovation, while other say it risks underestimating the unique dynamics presented by the scale and complexity of the digital economy. However, Regulatory Pragmatists maintain that the core issues – such as market dominance, consumer protection, transparency and accountability – remain the same.

Social Interventionists

Social Interventionists are troubled by the potential social harms posed by new technologies, particularly their influence on culture, values, and societal cohesion. They are motivated by a desire to implement guardrails around the use and spread of technology, focusing on access and content controls as primary levers. Social Interventionists are often alarmed by the proliferation of harmful content online, such as misinformation and explicit content. With public concern regarding the relationship between platforms and wellbeing rising following whistleblowing by individuals such as Frances Haugen, this perspective is gaining popular momentum. Drawing on thinkers like Jonathan Haidt, who critiques the effects of social media on young people, this group often calls for parental controls, age restrictions, and regulation to limit online harms.[22] Critics argue that this conservative approach risks overreach, stifling individuals' free expression, and suppressing dissenting voices. For this group, we cannot achieve a safe digital society without significant government intervention.

Existential Humanists

More extreme than Intentional Innovators, this group believes that the rapid evolution of technology could pose an existential risk to humankind. Viewing these challenges through the lens of species survival, as opposed to nationalistic or profit incentives, Existential Humanists emphasise the need to mitigate the long-term consequences of emerging technologies. They are motivated by various 'x-risks', including AI surpassing human control and biotech misuse.[23] This philosophy is often associated with Peter Singer, who calls on governments to demonstrate more urgency in their intervention and cooperation, asking 'Will we survive the next 100 years?'.[24] The *Future of Life Institute's open letter* calling for a pause on the development of advanced AI systems is an example of this philosophy in action.[25] Existential Humanists advocate for the establishment of global frameworks and institutions dedicated to monitoring and mitigating the existential risks posed to humanity by increasingly sophisticated technologies. Critics of this philosophy argue that their focus on speculative long-term risk distracts from pressing immediate challenges concerning Social Interventionists, such as AI-driven bias and discrimination. Existential Humanists counter that failing to anticipate and address these risks could lead to irreversible consequences for our species.

Eco-Technologists

Eco-Technologists are deeply concerned with the environmental costs of emerging technologies, viewing innovation not as a silver bullet but as a complex web of trade-offs. They argue that technological progress, such as AI, blockchain and renewable energy, often comes with hidden environmental costs, such as the massive energy consumption of AI compute or the extraction of critical minerals needed for devices and digital infrastructure.[26] For Eco-Technologists, these costs are often underestimated or overlooked in the rush to embrace new technologies. This philosophy is informed by thinkers like Kate Crawford and Sasha Luccioni, who critique the ecological footprint of unchecked AI developments.[27] Unlike Techno-Solutionists, who view technology as the solution to global challenges, Eco-Technologists see innovation as a double-edged sword, with benefits that must be carefully balanced against ecological harm. They advocate for stringent environmental regulations that require companies to account for the full lifecycle impacts of their products and services, from energy to e-waste. Critics of this view claim that this attitude slows down the ability to leverage technology to address global challenges. From the perspective of Eco-Technologists, we must ensure that tech progress does not come at the expense of the planet.

Digital Detoxers

Digital Detoxers are individuals concerned about the insidious impact of technology on modern life but pragmatic in their resistance. They advocate for a mindful and intentional approach to digital engagement, aiming to minimise their reliance on digital devices to enhance mental well-being and reconnect with offline experiences. This philosophy is captured by authors such as Catherine Price, whose book *How to Break Up with Your Phone* encourages readers to reduce their device dependency.[28] Like Social Interventionists and Regulatory Pragmatists, Digital Detoxers are concerned by the potential downsides of technology use, and advocate for government-led interventions. However, Digital Detoxers also emphasise a role for individuals to re-evaluate and limit their use of technology to specific instances that deliver intentional benefits. Critics of this philosophy argue that their focus on individual choices overlooks systemic issues with addictive technology design or increasing social and economic dependence on technology. Regardless, Digital Detoxers argue that pragmatically limiting time on devices is one of the quickest ways to positively reshape the impact of technology on society.

Off-Grid Sceptics

For Off-Grid Sceptics, digital technologies represent an intolerable web of control. This group disconnects from mainstream society to avoid what they perceive as the corrupt digital power of both government and big tech. Cyber Libertarians champion individual autonomy but still view technology as a tool of empowerment for individuals. In contrast, Off-Grid Sceptics see technology as a tool for subjugation. More extreme than Digital Detoxers' tech-in-moderation approach, Off-Grid Sceptics reject technology dependence and government authority outright. By definition, high profile Off-Grid sceptics are hard to come by, but the principles of Ralph Waldo Emerson's 1841 'Self-Reliance' essay conveys their counterculture spirit of individual autonomy, transcendentalism, and rejection of modern society.[29]

Clarity through comparison

Each of the 15 philosophies has their own specific beliefs, priorities, and motivations. There are clear tensions between some philosophical vantage points, and some natural alliances. These dynamics can be hard to see when examining specific tech policy approaches in isolation. When examined together, you can compare core beliefs and archetypes to identify each philosophy's natural allies and opponents. The remainder of this section is dedicated to such comparison.

Cross-Philosophy Dynamics

The tech policy ecosystem is shaped not only by the distinct philosophies of its groups, but also by their respective interactions. These ecosystem dynamics reveal a number of shared goals, opportunities for collaboration, and core tensions that define the evolving landscape of technology governance. As above, individuals and organisations can concurrently identify with multiple philosophies.

Shared Goals

Despite their differences, as noted above, several philosophies align on overarching objectives.

Empowering individuals: several tech policy philosophies are motivated to see technology empower individuals. For example, Cyber Libertarians and Digital Decentralisers both emphasise reducing centralised power, albeit through different mechanisms. While Cyber Libertarians advocate for minimal interference generally, Digital Decentralisers focus on building systems that inherently distribute power.

Using tech to improve people's lives: Cyber Libertarians, Digital Decentralisers, Digital Developers, Techno-Solutionists, and Intentional Innovators are all motivated to harness the power of technology to deliver better outcomes with a human-centred approach.

Mitigating tech risks: Intentional Innovators and Eco-Technologists both champion a cautious, principles approach to technological development. Their respective emphasis on balancing progress with ethical and environmental concerns is based on their shared commitment to integrating precautionary frameworks into innovation policies.

Collaborative Opportunities

Finding the middle ground: Intentional Innovators are well placed to mediate between Free Marketeers/Techno-Solutionists and Digital Developers/Eco-Technologists, ensuring innovation thrives while addressing issues such as inequality and ecological impact.

Environmental sustainability: Eco-Technologists and Existential Humanists can work together to advocate for environmental safeguards in technological development, based on their shared aversion to innovation at all costs.

Closing the digital divide: Digital Developers, Techno-Solutionists and Global Governors can collaborate to close the international digital divide and leverage technology to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals.

Preventing tech-enabled harms: Regulatory Pragmatists, Social Interventionists, and Intentional Innovators can collaborate on mitigating online harms through government regulation.

Core philosophical tensions

Individual versus collective: tech policy philosophies diverge on whether policy should prioritise the rights of the individual or the needs of society.

Decentralised versus centralised: technology can be used to centralise or decentralise power; philosophies diverge on which direction leads to the best results.

Global versus national: philosophical groups are divided on whether the primary frame of reference for tech policy should be the domestic jurisdiction or the global community.

Case study: TikTok Ban

The ongoing debate about banning TikTok in Australia and the US exemplifies a core tech policy tension of global versus national approaches. Techno-nationalists argue that TikTok poses a national security risk due to potential data access and content control by China. In contrast, Global Governors caution against interventionist actions that could fragment the internet and undermine cross-border digital cooperation.

Techno-optimism versus techno-pessimism*:* each of these philosophies is focused on the relationship between technology and society, but they all do so with a varying degree of hope and concern.

Unfettered innovation versus government intervention*:* tech philosophies see diversely different role for government in the tech ecosystem. Some advocate for minimal intervention, believing innovation thrives with fewer constraints, whilst others support an active role for government through enabling policies, funding, or regulation to ensure ethical standards, consumer protection, and societal well-being.

Case study: Digital Inclusion and the Australian National Broadband Network (NBN)

The NBN provides a clear example of a tech policy initiative aligned with the shared goals of multiple groups. Digital developers championed the NBN to reduce the digital divide, emphasising its potential to empower underserved communities through equitable internet access. However, tensions rose with Free Marketeers, who criticised the government-led rollout arguing that private sector competition would have delivered better outcomes. The debate highlighted the delicate balance between government intervention and market efficiency in achieving shared goals of tech empowerment.

Philosophical Clusters

These last two tensions – technology optimism and government intervention - are the most fundamental and cross cutting among the tech policy philosophies.

These two dimensions form the basis for a useful visualisation of the Taxonomy. The quadratic chart in Figure 1 maps all 15 tech policy philosophies based on their positions along two axes: their technology optimism and appetite for government intervention. See Appendix for an expanded summary table with information on where each philosophy was placed on these two dimensions.

The horizontal axis measures attitudes toward government involvement, ranging from minimal intervention on the left, to high levels of intervention (whether through regulation, strategy or investment) on the right. The vertical axis reflects the degree of technological optimism, with philosophies higher on the chart believing in technology's potential to address societal challenges and those lower on the chart adopting a more cautious or sceptical stance.

This chart not only situates each philosophy in relation to the others, but also highlights the ideological diversity within the tech policy ecosystem. It identifies areas of tension and alignment between philosophies, showing how philosophies in the same quadrant share the greatest common ground.

Charting the philosophies on these axes reveals four philosophical clusters:

Libertarian Innovators (top-left) emphasise technology's potential while resisting government oversight, favouring market-driven or decentralised solutions.	**Progressive Guardians** (top-right) are optimistic about technology's transformative power but advocate for strong government stewardship to guide and regulate its development.
Suspicious Individualists (bottom-left) exhibit limited trust in both technology and government, focusing instead on individual or community-level responses to technology-related risks.	**Sceptical Interventionists** (bottom-right) stress the importance of government guardrails to mitigate the perceived risks and harms of technology, often driven by concerns over societal impact.

By referring to these four high-level philosophical clusters, or zooming in to the 15 specific tech policy philosophies contained within them, practitioners can identify and navigate the ideological undercurrents of the tech policy ecosystem.

The Taxonomy of Tech Policy Philosophies, organised by philosophical cluster, is summarised in Table 1 on page 22.

TECH POLICY PHILOSOPHIES

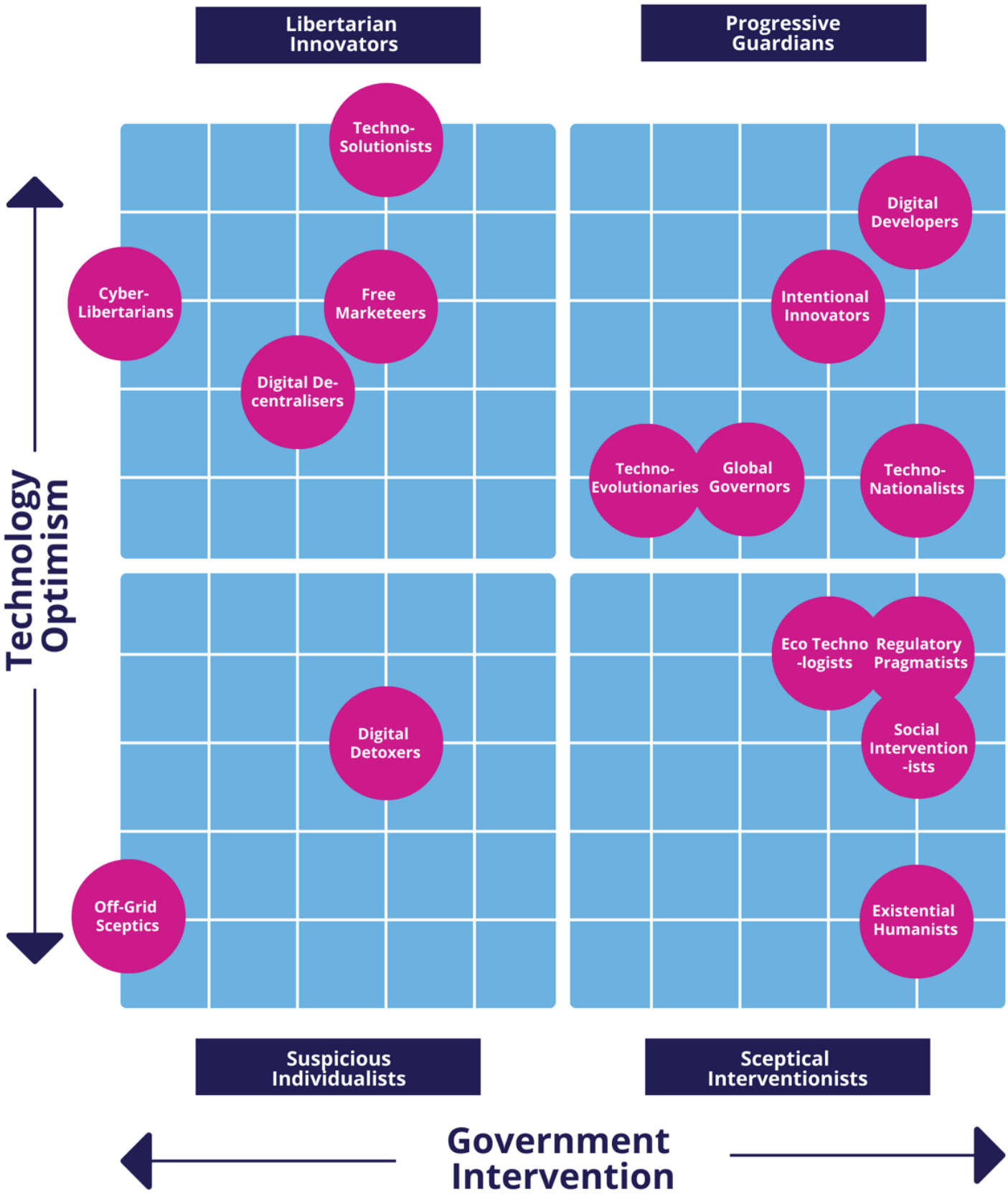

Figure 1: Mapping Tech Policy Philosophies by Technology Optimism and Government Intervention

Table 1. Summary of the Taxonomy of Tech Policy Philosophies

Remember: individuals and organisations will often embody more than one of these philosophies – on different issues, with different stakeholders, possibly at the same time. The list is not intended to be mutually exclusive or completely exhaustive but provides a foundational picture of the tech policy ecosystem.

***Archetypes** are illustrative only. Like all of us, many of those named could easily align with several of the Tech Policy Philosophies.

TECH POLICY PHILOSOPHY	CORE BELIEFS	OFTEN FOUND IN	ARCHETYPE*	NATURAL ALLIES	NATURAL OPPONENTS
Libertarian Innovators					
Cyber Libertarians	Technology, particularly the internet, is a transformative force for individual freedom; minimal government intervention	Civil liberties organisations, open-source communities	John Perry Barlow Poet & founder of Electronic Frontier Foundation	Digital Decentralisers (shared scepticism of centralised authority); Off-Grid Sceptics (shared rejection of government interference)	Social Interventionists (government intervention); Regulatory Pragmatists (government intervention)
Digital Decentralisers	Decentralised technologies empower individuals, enhance transparency, and reduce reliance on centralised institutions	Blockchain projects, Web 3.0 startups, crypto communities	Satoshi Nakamoto Presumed pseudonymous person or persons who developed bitcoin	Cyber Libertarians (opposition to centralisation); Techno-Solutionists (tech as a tool to solve problems)	Techno-Nationalists (focus on centralised power); Free Marketeers (accept centralised market power)
Techno-Solutionists	Technology is the most efficient way to solve societal challenges; progress should not be restrained	Tech startups, R&D labs, venture capital ecosystems	Ray Kurzweil Computer scientist & author of *The Singularity is Near (and Nearer)*	Free Marketeers (emphasis on unrestrained progress); Digital Developers (benefits of tech)	Eco-Technologists (hidden costs); Regulatory Pragmatists (government intervention); Existential Humanists (long term tech risks)
Free Marketeers	Market forces drive efficiency, productivity, and innovation; oppose regulation as it stifles progress	Corporate lobby groups, free market think tanks	Peter Theil Entrepreneur, venture capitalist & political activist	Techno-Solutionists (minimal regulation); Cyber Libertarian (no role for government)	Regulatory Pragmatists (regulatory intervention); Digital Developers (role for government)

TECH POLICY PHILOSOPHY	CORE BELIEFS	OFTEN FOUND IN	ARCHETYPE*	NATURAL ALLIES	NATURAL OPPONENTS
Progressive Guardians					
Digital Developers	Technology is a tool for advancing social and economic equity, focusing on underserved communities	NGOs, international development organisations, education-focused initiatives	Payal Arora Anthropologist & author of *The Next Billion Users*	Global Governors (international cooperation); Intentional Innovators (ethical approaches)	Techno-Nationalists (zero-sum game of technology access); Free Marketeers (focus on profit over equity)
Global Governors	Technology's risks and opportunities are global; advocate for international cooperation and governance with states at the centre	Multilateral and multistakeholder organisations, international policy forums	Doreen Bogdan-Martin Secretary General of the International Telecommunications Union	Digital Developers (role of tech for development); Eco-Technologists (cooperation on climate impact of tech); Existential Humanists (global cooperation)	Techno-Nationalists (national focus); Free Marketeers (anti-regulation stance); Cyber Libertarians (oppose central role of states)
Techno-Evolutionaries	Big tech companies are global institutions reshaping governance and markets; they are partners to engage in domestic and global governance	Big tech companies, global governance discussions, cyber diplomacy	Ian Bremmer Political scientist & founder and President of Eurasia Group	Free Marketeers (value of private enterprise); Techno-Nationalists (importance of national tech leadership); Techno-Solutionists (power of tech companies)	Eco-Technologists (critique of environmental impact); Regulatory Pragmatists (calls for accountability); Global Governors (cooperation to constrain companies)
Techno-Nationalists	Technological development is critical for national security; government must support and drive innovation in a global competition	Defence agencies, government innovation programs, security think tanks	Eric Schmidt Founding Partner of Innovation Endeavours & former CEO of Google	Techno-Evolutionaries (importance of tech leadership); Global Governors (minilateral and multilateral collaboration with allies)	Cyber Libertarians & Free Marketeers (opposition to government involvement); Global Governors (broad multilateralism)
Intentional Innovators	Technology's potential must take a human-centred approach aligning with ethical, social, and environmental priorities; advocate deliberate progress	Ethics boards, human rights organisations, policy advocacy groups, academic institutions	Audrey Tang Taiwan's inaugural Digital Minister, now Cyber Ambassador	Eco-Technologists (precautionary approach); Regulatory Pragmatists (role for policy and regulation); Social Interventionists (mitigating tech harms); Digital Developers (equity of access to tech benefits)	Techno-Solutionists (unrestrained progress); Cyber Libertarians & Free Marketeers (resistance regulation)

TECH POLICY PHILOSOPHY	CORE BELIEFS	OFTEN FOUND IN	ARCHETYPE*	NATURAL ALLIES	NATURAL OPPONENTS
Sceptical Interventionists					
Regulatory Pragmatists	Digital technologies are not novel; existing regulatory principles and frameworks can and must be adapted to address their risks and impacts	Government and regulatory agencies, antitrust and consumer protection bodies	Julie Inman-Grant Australia's eSafety Commissioner	Intentional Innovators (guardrails on innovation); Global Governors (value of governance)	Techno-Solutionists (unregulated innovation); Techno-Evolutionaries (unique corporate role)
Social Interventionists	Technology should be regulated to prevent social harms, prioritising the protection of social values	Advocacy groups for child safety, family values, non-discrimination, educational institutions	Frances Haugen Facebook Whistleblower & Online Safety Advocate	Regulatory Pragmatists (support for content control); Intentional Innovators (value of guardrails)	Cyber Libertarians (resistance to censorship and regulation); Free Marketeers (focus on minimal intervention)
Existential Humanists	Rapid technological evolution poses existential risks; global cooperation is needed to address x-risks	Philosophy departments, existential risk research institutes	Peter Singer Moral philosopher & Emeritus Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University	Global Governors (global frameworks); Intentional Innovators (precautionary approach); Off-Grid Sceptics (fear the impact of tech)	Techno-Evolutionaries (recognising corporate power); Techno-Solutionists (focus on innovation over caution)
Eco-Technologists	Innovation has hidden environmental costs; progress must balance benefits with ecological harm	Environmental advocacy groups, sustainability-focused tech companies	Sasha Luccioni AI & Climate Lead at Hugging Face	Intentional Innovators (guardrails on innovation); Existential Humanists (long-term risks)	Techno-Solutionists (blind optimism); Free Marketeers (profit-first approach)

TECH POLICY PHILOSOPHY	CORE BELIEFS	OFTEN FOUND IN	ARCHETYPE*	NATURAL ALLIES	NATURAL OPPONENTS
Suspicious Individualists					
Digital Detoxers	Tech has significant drawbacks on well-being and society; advocate for minimising usage but not total avoidance	Wellness movements, mindfulness advocates, self-help spaces	Catherine Price Health and science journalist & author of *How To Break Up with Your Phone*	Social Interventionists (concerns about harm); Intentional Innovators (purposeful engagement with tech)	Techno-Solutionists (more tech is the answer); Free-Marketeers (pro-tech growth)
Off-Grid Sceptics	Tech is a means of control and surveillance by government and big tech, reject modern society entirely	Counterculture communities, eco-villages, anarchist groups	If you can name them, they are not an Off-Grid Sceptic	Existential Humanists (fear of long-term risks); Digital Detoxers (shared scepticism of tech benefits)	Techno-Solutionists (tech solves all problems); Digital Developers (pro-access and inclusion)

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PART 2: THE MAP OF AUSTRALIAN TECH POLICY STAKEHOLDERS

Who's who in the zoo?

Since 2010, technology has shifted from a relatively niche, technical policy domain to a central and contentious policy area spanning multiple government portfolios. This evolution reflects how deeply technology now influences society, the economy and geopolitics. What was once the domain of specialist agencies, has become a whole-of-government task in 2025, requiring coordination across diverse stakeholders.

Different countries have adopted varying approaches to manage this complexity. Our previous report, *Tending the Tech Ecosystem,* contains overviews of the regulatory structures of 14 jurisdictions globally.[30]

In Australia, the approach reflects a combination of centralisation and diffusion. As highlighted in the companion report to *Tending the Tech Eco-system*, *Cultivating Coordination*,[31] Australia's tech policy ecosystem features overlapping responsibilities and a diverse set of actors spanning federal, state, and local levels. Coordination is complicated by the broad spectrum of policy domains affected, from cyber security to consumer protection, and the increasing intersection of tech issues with traditional policy issues like healthcare and education.

A navigational tool for practitioners

The *Map of Australian Tech Policy Ecosystem* is designed to demystify this complex landscape. Taking a multistakeholder view, it captures the full range of stakeholders that should be included in best practice tech policy development in Australia. The Map is accompanied by an *Index of Australian Government Tech Policy Responsibilities*.

How to use the Map and Index

The Map and Index are tools for tech policy practitioners. It comprises:

- Map of Australian Tech Policy Stakeholders: a multistakeholder visualisation of Australian tech policy stakeholders and a depiction of the relationships between Australian Government departments, agencies, regulators, offices, and organisations working on tech policy at the federal level.
- Index of Australian Government Tech Policy Responsibilities, which details:
  - federal government tech policy responsibilities by department as reflected in the *Administrative Arrangement Order* (as amended on 29 July 2024)[32]
  - key tech policy areas within each department, as drawn from organisational charts available on departmental websites
  - key tech policy portfolio responsibilities (Commonwealth entities, companies, boards and other relevant structures) as reflected in the *Australian Government Portfolio Directory*[33]

The Map and Index are intended to:

- Enhance stakeholder identification: help quickly identify relevant government, civil society, research or industry stakeholders that may be involved in specific tech policy areas, powering more efficient engagement.
- Improve coordination and consultation: provide a visual reminder of the cross-cutting nature of tech policy through all portfolios of government policy and across the broader tech ecosystem. This will encourage, and help guide, enhanced coordination and consultation across government and between all stakeholders on shared tech policy issues.
- Empower practitioners to navigate the ecosystem effectively and drive better tech policy outcomes: serve as a valuable reference for practitioners, both inside and outside government.

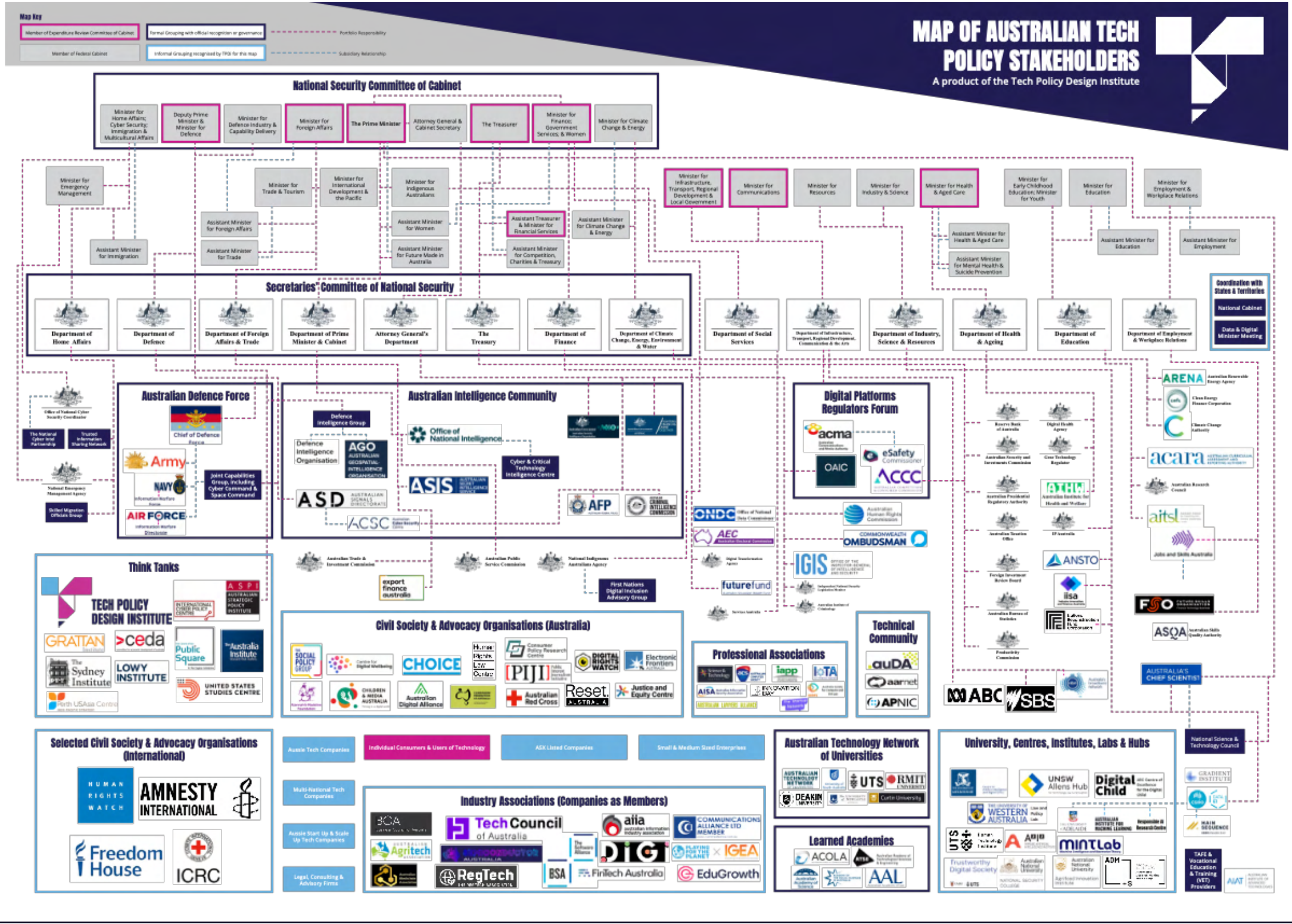
The Map and Index reflect the current state of Australia's tech policy landscape in January 2025. It will be maintained and updated by TPDi over time to reflect further evolutions in the ecosystem.

To view, download, or print a high-resolution copy of the latest version of the Map and accompanying Index, please visit TPDi's website: www.techpolicy.au/stakehholdermap

Figure 2. The Map of Australian Tech Policy Stakeholders

MAP OF AUSTRALIAN TECH POLICY STAKEHOLDERS

A product of the Tech Policy Design Institute



Fill gaps in representation

While the Map captures a diverse range of perspectives, certain voices remain underrepresented or overlooked in the Australian ecosystem and globally.

TPDi recommends all stakeholders take proactive steps to address the following gaps to create a more inclusive and equitable tech policy landscape:

- First Nations Perspectives: Indigenous communities bring unique knowledge systems and priorities, including digital cultural heritage and equitable access to technology. Engaging with Indigenous organisations during tech policy design and developing frameworks for digital inclusion are crucial steps.
- Voices of Young People: Young people are often both primary users and the most affected by emerging technologies, yet their representation in policy discussions is usually limited. Initiatives like mentorship programs, youth advisory councils, and partnerships with organisations advocating for children's rights can amplify these voices.
- Disability and Neurodiversity: Ensuring accessibility in technology design and policymaking is essential to making sure everyone can enjoy the benefits of technology. Collaboration with neurodiverse individuals and people with disability during tech policy design is essential to deliver meaningful inclusivity.
- Regional and Remote Communities: Geographic disparities in access to technology persist, requiring targeted efforts to close the digital divide. Policy initiatives addressing broadband access, digital literacy, and local innovation hubs important, as is representation of these communities in tech policy design.
- Women and Gender Diverse Perspectives: Women and gender diverse individuals remain underrepresented in technology development despite facing unique challenges, including but not limited to online safety and algorithmic bias. Proactive measures like gender-inclusive design, commitments to equality in representation, both supported by targeted funding, can help address this gap.
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities: Multilingual and culturally diverse communities often face systemic barriers to access and use of technology. Addressing this requires culturally responsive policymaking, expanded language accessibility, and stronger engagement with community-led organisations.

A collective and continual effort to address these gaps in representation will lead to more inclusive and, importantly, more effective tech policy design. In turn, this will deliver better technology for all users.

Coordinate to overcome ecosystem complexity

As the Map shows, the Australian tech policy ecosystem is complex. Without meaningful coordination, this complexity will undermine efforts to design effective tech policy.

As our previous research found, in the field of tech policy, the muscle memory for coordination by-default does not yet exist. Too often, tech policy is developed in silos, resulting in duplication, dilution of efforts, and persistent legal gaps.

Due to the comparatively nascent nature of tech policy, mainstream policy coordination mechanisms (themselves in need of reform) fall short, and the siloed nature of existing dedicated tech policy coordination mechanisms undermines their effectiveness.

TPDi recommends establishing the Tech Policy Coordination Model proposed in our previous report, *Cultivating Coordination*. This model streamlines tech policy coordination, while uplifting the capacity of all actors in the tech-ecosystem.

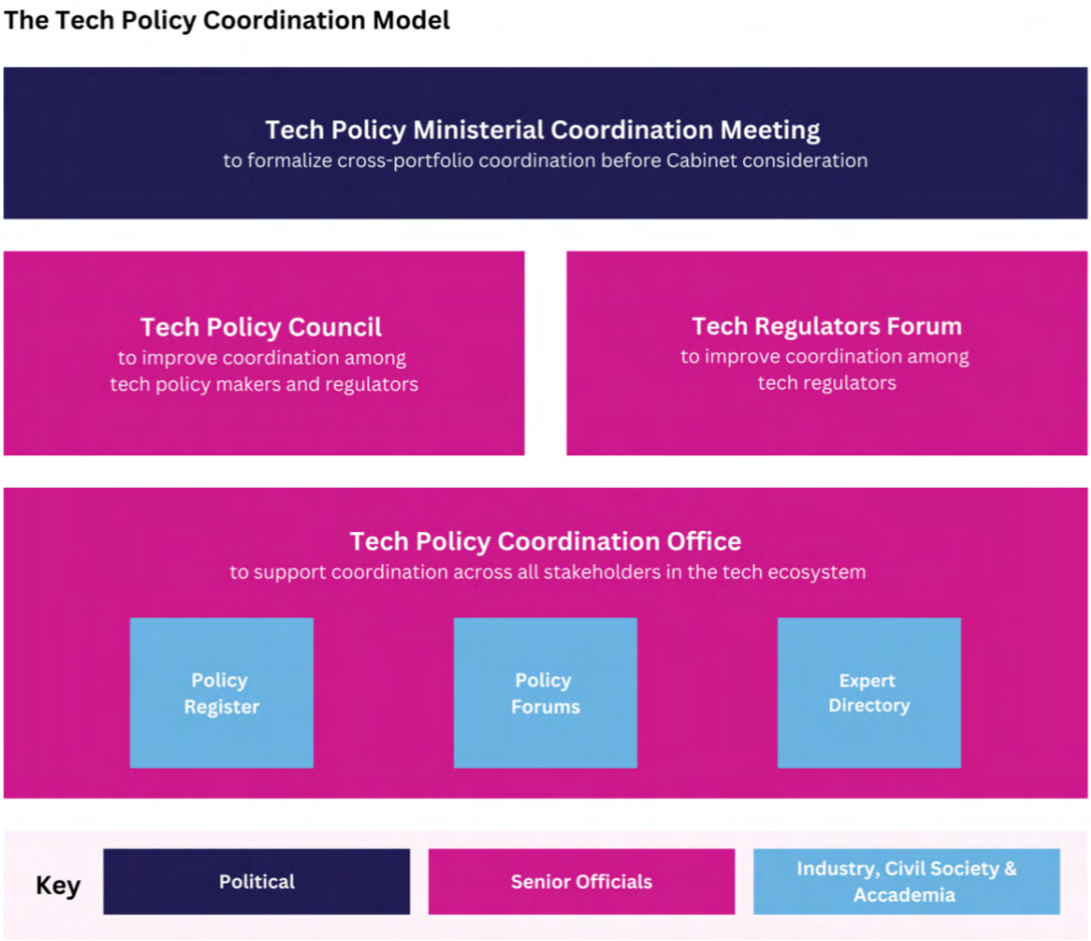


Figure 3. The Tech Policy Coordination Model

Importantly, the Model, depicted in Figure 3, does not alter the existing mandates of Ministers, departments or regulators. However, by cultivating coordination the Model would facilitate comprehensive and considered development of tech policy resulting in more effective regulatory outcomes.

One addition to the recommendations in *Cultivating Coordination*, revealed when reviewing the *Map of Australia Tech Policy Stakeholders*, could be to harness the roles of Assistant Ministers to oversee the proposed Tech Policy Ministerial Co-ordination Meeting. For further details on the Tech Policy Coordination Model, please explore *Cultivating Coordination*, available on TPDi's website.

Paired with the transparency provided by the *Map of Australian Tech Policy Stakeholders*, and the understanding built by the *Taxonomy of Tech Policy Philosophies*, this Model will help facilitate greater cross-ecosystem coordination and collaboration to inform best practice tech policy design.

CONCLUSION

Tech policy – its ideologies, stakeholders, tensions, and synergies – is complex, but it is also the key to unlocking technology's greatest benefits for society.

The *Taxonomy of Tech Policy Philosophies* and the *Map of Australian Tech Policy Stakeholders* are practical tools for understanding the ideological and structural dimensions of the tech policy ecosystem.

Taken together, they are intended to empower individuals and organisations to navigate and contribute to this landscape with knowledge, confidence, and impact.

Our tech future is not static or pre-determined. Technology simultaneously offers great opportunity and presents a myriad of significant risks. We have the agency to shape that future by engaging in constructive tech policy dialogue, debate, and collaboration.

Join us in navigating and shaping the tech policy ecosystem to design a positive future, together.

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APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

This report was developed through a combination of methods:

- Literature review: desk research to collate and analyse existing resources on tech policy taxonomy and tech policy responsibilities. These are detailed in the full list of references.
- Building on previous work: leveraging TPDi's previous research on Australia's tech policy coordination and division of government's portfolio responsibilities.
- Quadrant visualisation: based on the literature review, the 15 tech policy philosophies were scored out of 10 for the two core dimensions of optimism (0 as very pessimistic, 10 as very optimistic) and government intervention (0 as wanting no government intervention, and 10 as seeking heavy government intervention). The ascribed scores were used to populate the quadrant chart and are included in the annotated summary table below.
- Expert stakeholder consultation: Engaging with representatives from government, industry, academia, and civil society through our expert review process.

TECH POLICY PHILOSOPHY	CORE BELIEFS	TECHNOLOGY OPTIMISM	GOVT INTERVENTION
Cyber Libertarians	Technology, particularly the internet, is a transformative force for individual freedom; minimal government intervention.	**8** Tech offers a means for individual empowerment	**0** Not a place for 'weary giants of flesh and steal'
Digital Decentralisers	Decentralised technologies empower individuals, enhance transparency, and reduce reliance on centralised institutions.	**7** Optimistic about the power of certain tools, but also oppose to the way tech has centralised power	**2** Certain enabling roles?
Techno-Solutionists	Technology is the most efficient way to solve societal challenges; progress should not be restrained.	**10** Tech is a positive solution to all problems	**3** Support for R&D and start up ecosystem
Free Marketeers	Market forces drive efficiency, productivity, and innovation; oppose regulation as it stifles progress.	**8** Confident that the market will deliver positive outcomes	**3** Don't want regulation but may embrace favourable policy settings for innovators
Digital Developers	Technology is a tool for advancing social and economic equity, focusing on underserved communities.	**9** Access to tech unlocks positive socio-economic and political outcomes	**9** Funding and initiatives for these digital inclusion initiatives
Global Governors	Technology's risks and opportunities are global; advocate for international cooperation and governance.	**6** Neutral, tech presents risks and opportunities, both of which require int cooperation	**7** Governments to engage with others around the world, but also with other stakeholders like civil society, private sector & technical community
Techno-Evolutionaries	Big tech companies are global institutions reshaping governance and markets; they are partners to engage.	**6** Believe big tech has altered global power relations, but not inherently positive or negative	**6** A role for government in engaging with these companies, but see a change in govt's relative power and rise in corporate role
Techno-Nationalists	Technological development is critical for national security; government must support and drive innovation.	**6** Relatively neutral, tech poses both opportunity and risk for national security, but in the tech race proactively pursuing the benefits of 'innovation power'	**9** Competitive advantage in tech race is existential so big role for government
Intentional Innovators	Technology's potential must align with ethical, social, and environmental priorities; advocate deliberate progress.	**8** Optimistic about the potential of technology, but believes this is not guaranteed, policy is required and risks need to be managed	**8** Role for government to create enabling policy settings, regulatory certainty and investment in tech

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TECH POLICY PHILOSOPHY	CORE BELIEFS	TECHNOLOGY OPTIMISM	GOVT INTERVENTION
Regulatory Pragmatists	Digital technologies are not novel; existing regulatory frameworks can address their risks and impacts.	**4** Neutral, tech is no different to other sectors and requires regulation to mitigate risks	**9** Government should apply regulation to combat techno-evolutionism
Social Interventionists	Technology should be regulated to prevent social harms, prioritising cultural cohesion and the protection of social values	**3** Concerned about the harmful impact of technology on society	**9** Significant role for government in preventing tech related harms through regulation
Existential Humanists	Rapid technological evolution poses existential risks; global cooperation is needed to address x-risks.	**1** Sees tech as posing species extinction risk, advocates for course correction and mitigation	**9** Advocate strongly for global frameworks to address risks
Eco-Technologists	Innovation has hidden environmental costs; progress must balance benefits with ecological harm.	**4** Believe tech can have high ecological cost, sceptical of tech development	**8** Government should implement guardrails to mitigate environmental harms from tech
Digital Detoxers	Tech has significant drawbacks on mental well-being and society; advocate for minimising usage but not total avoidance.	**3** Not looking to government intervention to solve problems, minimising individual use	**3** Pessimistic about impact of tech but recognise its practical use in society, uses in moderation
Off-Grid Sceptics	View technology as a means of control and surveillance by both government and big tech; rejects modern society.	**1** May have their own isolated technologies, but do not want to connect to broader digital society	**0** Rejects government authority, opposes regulation and seeks autonomy away from collective society

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