

Australian Internet Observatory (AIO)

2026 Mid-Point Co-Design Overview

AIO, HASS and Indigenous Research Data Commons

8 May 2026

What is the Australian Internet Observatory?



The Australian Internet Observatory (AIO) is an ARDC co-investment partnership that provides digital observability for social research through innovative data collection and analysis tools, methods and workflows.

Digital platforms play a critical role in Australia’s economy and society, yet access to data and activities on digital platforms, apps and sensors is still limited. The AIO tools and capabilities support greater observability by enabling donated data collection through data download packages and screen capture features, and API-based content collection.

Watch a [recent presentation](#) for an overview of AIO capabilities.

2026 Mid-Point Co-Design Process

The AIO aims to support digital platform observability for researchers across HASS disciplines, as well as many other fields interested in the potential of digital platform data. To enable researchers to undertake research on digital platforms, AIO is building a central platform for project workflows, data donation collection tools, integrated data management protocols, and an outreach and training program.



AIO Platform

The AIO Platform is the gateway for researchers to set up their projects and engage participants. Researchers can register projects, specify target platforms, and configure briefing and debriefing pages for data donation tools and methods. AIO also provides several data visualisation and exploration tools to allow researchers to monitor and analyse data, conduct quality checks, track temporal patterns, and preview content, allowing for the examination of complex information without coding skills. The platform also supports participant engagement, exploration and complimentary research methods such as interviews, surveys, digital ethnography and data enrichment. The AIO Platform will be launched and available for researchers in August 2026.



Data Download Packages (DDP)

The AIO Data Export tools provide a workflow for exporting and working with platform data download packages (DDPs) from participants. Participants are given instructions on how to find and export their DDPs, upload them to AIO, review and select their contribution and then upload. Data Download Packages (DDPs) are personal data archives that users can request and download from a digital platform. They contain a structured collection of activity histories, interaction records, advertising data, and metadata.



Screen Capture - Mobile or Browser

The Screen Capture approach uses a mobile app or browser extension to capture data from a participant's device. The screen capture process is programmed to identify and capture specific content on a participant's device based on the research design of the project. This can include images, audio, video, text, metadata etc.

Combining AIO Data Donation with other methods



Data donation methods can be aligned with, and add value to, established research approaches in digital platform studies, including mixed-method designs that combine donated data with qualitative interviews, surveys, ethnography, or other interpretive methods as appropriate.

The AIO 2026 mid-point co-design process aims to gather input from the broader research community on digital platform research methodologies and use of the AIO data donation tools and capabilities. Feedback is sought from researchers across HASS, as well as health, environmental science, information and communication technology and other disciplines; researchers and analysts in civil society, government and industry; NRI and research support staff.

Insights from this process will inform future development of the AIO data donation tools and capabilities. Once all the feedback is received, AIO will publish a written response to the feedback in mid-2026. This document will be shared via email to those who have [registered their interest in the HASS and Indigenous RDC](#).

2026 Mid-Point Co-Design Questions

Please answer as many of the following questions as you are able in your response to the AIO 2026 mid-point co-design. You do not have to answer all the questions in order to provide feedback. Information collected is in accordance with the ARDC [Privacy Policy](#).

- 1. What data collection methods do you currently use in your research?**
- 2. Do you currently use data from digital platforms in your research?**
 - 2a) If so, what data collection methods do you use?
 - 2b) If not, what data collection methods are you most likely to use for research involving digital platforms?
- 3. Do you currently use digital platform data donation tools and capabilities in your research?**
 - 3a) If so, what data donation tools and capabilities do you use and how?
 - 3b) If not, how would you use data donation tools and capabilities in your research?
- 4. Would you combine digital platform data donation with other data collection methods in mixed methods research?**
 - 4a) If so, what methods would you combine with data donation (e.g., interviews, digital ethnography, surveys etc.) and why?
- 5. How would you use the AIO Platform in your research?**

Please provide your feedback here: [AIO Mid-Point Co-Design Survey](#).

Alternatively, you can email your feedback answering these questions to hassi.codesign@ardc.edu.au using [this word document template](#).

The AIO is a co-investment partnership with RMIT University, Queensland University of Technology, University of Queensland, University of Melbourne, Swinburne University, Deakin University and the Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC) through the HASS and Indigenous Research Data Commons (DOI: [10.3565/hjrp-b141](#)). The ARDC is enabled by the Australian Government's National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS).