

Minister for Commerce and Trade

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Western Australia is poised to tap a multi-million dollar market in new computer technology following a State Government initiative.

State Cabinet has approved funding for a major trial of technology linking different types of computer systems.

The technology allows world-wide connection of computer systems, regardless of their format.

Commerce and Trade Minister, Hendy Cowan, said the move could establish Western Australia as a national and international centre of expertise in this lucrative field.

The trial of Open Systems Interconnection ('OSI') Standards within government is being backed by more than \$2 million investment from overseas companies.

Mr. Cowan said the OSI trial had the potential to put the State at the forefront of Australian and Asian research into the technology. He said:

'This technology is predicted to fundamentally change the computer in-

dustry. It will give computer users the ability to buy a range of different systems which can be inter-connected with other States, interstate and international systems. It is estimated that within three years the worldwide market for OSI-related software and services could be as much as \$US81.2 billion in the United States alone. The Government has moved to ensure that Western Australia is at the leading edge of this exciting new area. Government support for the trial would also increase the likelihood of Federal Government support of \$1 million a year for a national OSI testing centre to be based in Western Australia.'

The trial would also speed up the implementation of OSI within State Government agencies, leading to lower costs and increased efficiency.

Cabinet has approved immediate funding of nearly \$200,000 for the project, with additional money if the trial proves successful.

Mr. Cowan said eight multi-national companies had already provided written commitments of in-princi-

ple support totalling more than \$2 million.

The OSI trial would also be supported by Telecom Australia, the Malaysian Government, local companies and other Federal and State Government agencies.

Mr. Cowan said the trial would be organised by a committee of experts from the Department of Commerce and Trade, State Services and the Information Policy Unit of State Treasury.

The trial would be conducted at the OSI Systems Centre, and established by a local company Integrated Systems Australia in conjunction with Curtin University.

'This is an exciting project for Western Australia and has great potential,' Mr. Cowan said.

'It is another example of the opportunities available for Western Australia to take advantage of Asian markets'.

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