

CIO50 Nominations closing in **4** WEEKS **03** HOURS **19** MINUTES **26** SECONDS [NOMINATE NOW](#)

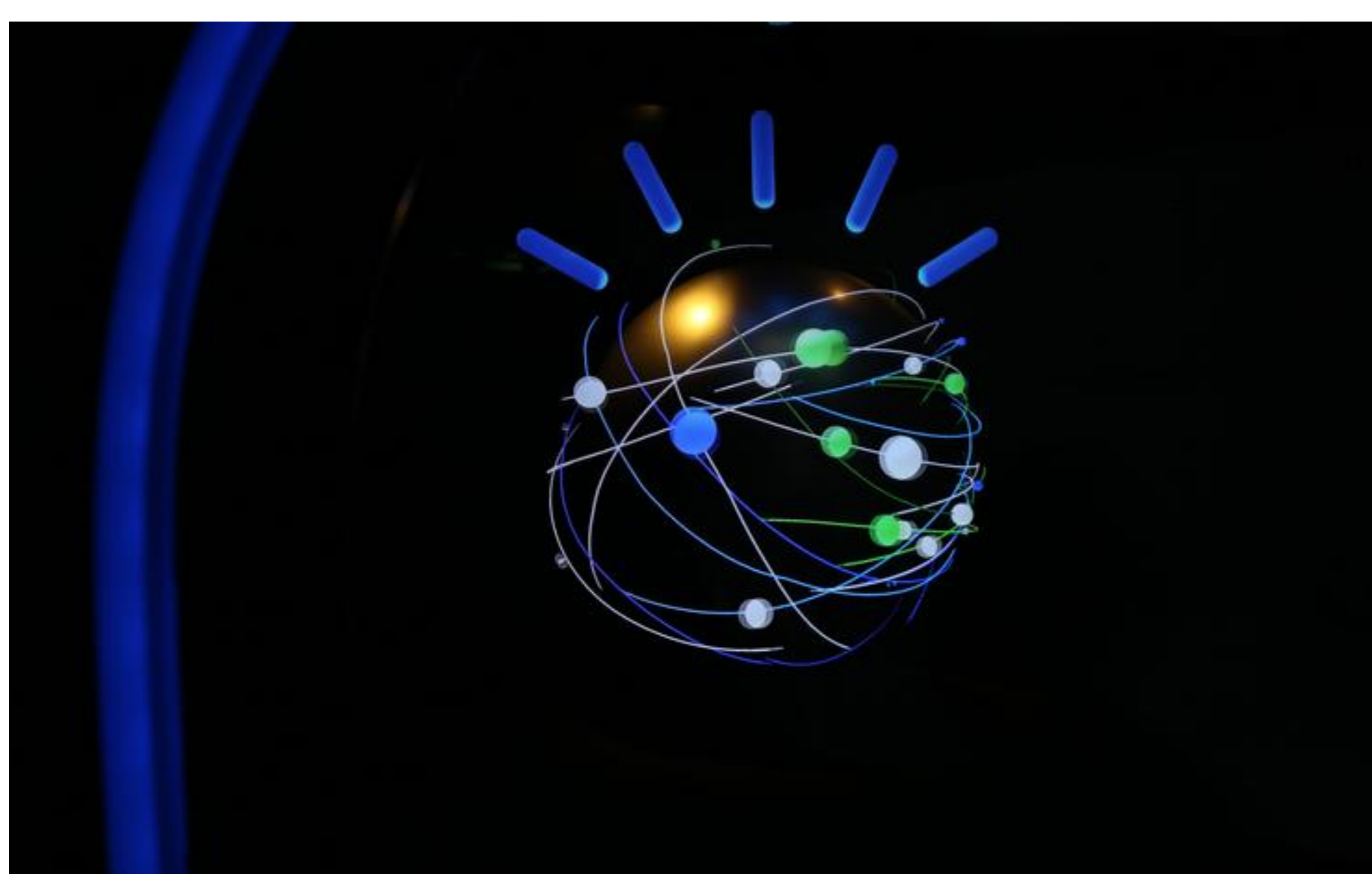
Disability system to tap IBM's Watson

Cognitive computing, avatars to drive national disability platform

 **Byron Connolly (CIO)**
14 October, 2015 11:12

[f](#) [in](#) [t](#) [p](#) [e](#)

0 Comments



Related Whitepapers

Government agencies responsible for deploying the technology that will drive the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will soon gain access to the cognitive computing capabilities of IBM's Watson.

Marie Johnson, head of technology authority at the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), and Department of Human Services' CTO, Charles McHardie, last week returned from a trip to the United States to lock up access to advances in the burgeoning areas of contextual and human machine interfaces and cognitive computing.

Johnson and McHardie had discussions with staff at IBM Watson with a view to incorporating cognitive computing functions into a 'fit for purpose' technology platform that will support Australians with complex physical and intellectual disabilities under the \$22 billion NDIS scheme. The system will touch around 2 million Australians through community support services when full coverage is achieved in 2019-20.

Johnson told *CIO* that the disability system will be truly intelligent and self-learning, enabling people with disabilities to interact through 'gamified' content or avatar interfaces, driven by Watson.

"This is the first application of Watson in this space to gain insights into the disability sector ... it's about having insight through the Watson technology that can evolve over time and to make the services continually more refined," Johnson said.

 **BRANDPOST**
CIO Spotlight: Anthony Molina


More from CIO Executive Council »

Johnson and McHardie also met with Tim Berners-Lee, who invented the World Wide Web, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The NDIA and DHS will engage with Berners-Lee's web accessibility taskforces that aim to improve web standards and provide everyone with simple, affordable access to the Internet.

"We will be putting in place some ongoing partnerships through the taskforce [that is] working on accessibility. We will be one of the countries working on that," Johnson told *CIO*.

"There's worldwide interest in what we are doing for a number of reasons – not only because it's the biggest social reform in Australia since the introduction of Medicare but the converging impact of disability and ageing on all governments and all budgets and the convergence of technology solutions for these areas.

"They see what we are doing as potentially achieving some breakthroughs in not only the service delivery models but the standards to drive these innovative interfaces," Johnson said.

 [READ MORE](#)
[Govt to dump \\$18.5M into facial biometrics](#)

Meanwhile, Deloitte is also providing access to its GovLab, a think tank in Washington D.C., that focuses on innovation in the public sector.

Johnson and McHardie met with Bill Eggers, Deloitte's global leader for public sector and senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Public Policy.

"It's a massive collaboration lab where different organisations – public sector leaders – can be brought in with Deloitte leaders and really break through some different concepts. They apply big data analytics to that process," Johnson said.

Around \$1 billion of the \$22 billion spent on the NDIS over the next few years will be devoted to deploying assistive technologies, Johnson said.

 [READ MORE](#)
[Highlights from the 2015 state iAwards](#)

"We are going to explode that by driving this ecosystem of interfaces. So it will be a commercially sustainable system opening up potentially bigger and newer markets," Johnson said.

By July 1 next year, the government expects to have a foundation system ready to be deployed.

The basis of the system is around giving users 'choice and control' as some 60 per cent of users will have an intellectual disability, Johnson said.

"That's the foundation principle for the NDIS. That's not about government saying 'here it is', it's about the participants engaging in their context. An example could be that the content for a particular person is gamified – they could have a Minecraft experience with their information. This will require a different rendering of information that would be otherwise presented," Johnson said.


 [READ MORE](#)
[Woodside to tap into IBM's Watson](#)

"As that person grows or changes their interests, that information can be re-rendered in different contexts."

Johnson and McHardie will discuss national disability technology at the NDIA New World Conference in Brisbane from October 27 to 29.

"Gary Sterenberg [DHS' CIO], and I are really keen to showcase the thinking. I've always said that Australia is good at [innovation], and we need to draw on the world's best, which we are. I think this is a great example to be celebrated that this is Australia at its best," Johnson said.

Mark Sagar, director of the Laboratory for Animate Technology at the Auckland Bioengineering Institute, will be presenting at the conference. Mark won an Academy Award for his work on James Cameron's 2009 film, *Avatar*.

 [READ MORE](#)
[OneSchool IT failure a wake up call for Queensland Education Department](#)

"We have had several meetings with him. We are looking to do work with Mark around piloting an avatar as part of a service delivery interface. Exactly what that ends up looking like is yet to be planned.

"The technology is there so what we are doing is looking at the ways in which of all these technologies can be brought together to deliver a different experience for a person with a disability," Johnson said.

Follow *CIO Australia* on Twitter and Like us on Facebook... [Twitter: @CIO_Australia](#), [Facebook: CIO Australia](#), or take part in the *CIO* conversation on [LinkedIn: CIO Australia](#)

Follow Byron Connolly on Twitter: [@ByronConnolly](#)

 [READ MORE](#)
[Universities to help Watson tackle cybercrime](#)

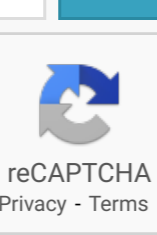
Read More:

- [NDIS's payment portal issues almost fixed: Christian Porter](#)
- [NDIA recruits Cate Blanchett to voice new avatar](#)
- [Why My Health Record is flawed](#)

Join the [CIO Australia group on LinkedIn](#). The group is open to CIOs, IT Directors, COOs, CTOs and senior IT managers.

Join the newsletter!

Email address [Join](#)

I'm not a robot  [Privacy - Terms](#)

Or

[in](#) Sign in with LinkedIn [f](#) Sign in with Facebook

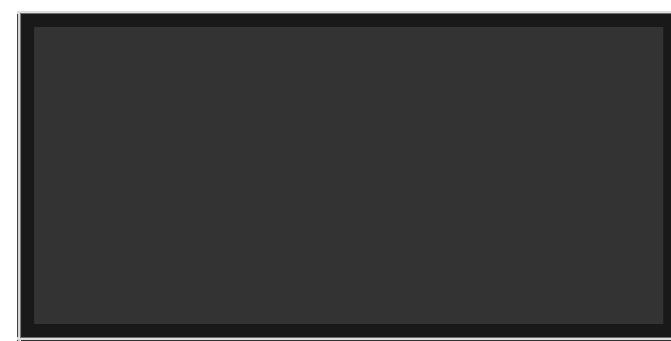
Sign up to gain exclusive access to email subscriptions, event invitations, competitions, giveaways, and much more. Membership is free, and your security and privacy remain protected. View our [privacy policy](#) before signing up.

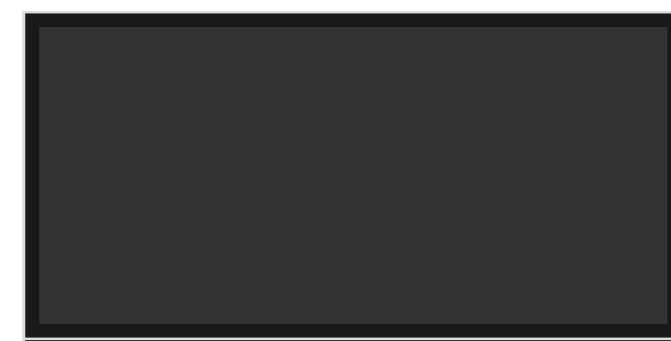
Tags [Deloitte](#) [tim berners-lee](#) [avatar](#) [NDIS](#) [Department of Human Services](#) [James Cameron](#) [Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) [Auckland Bioengineering Institute](#) [IBM Watson](#) [government agencies](#) [cognitive computing](#) [Marie Johnson](#) [National Disability Insurance Agency](#) [Bill Eggers](#) [Charles McHardie](#) [National Disability Insurance Scheme](#) [Mark Sagar](#) [Laboratory for Animate Technology](#)

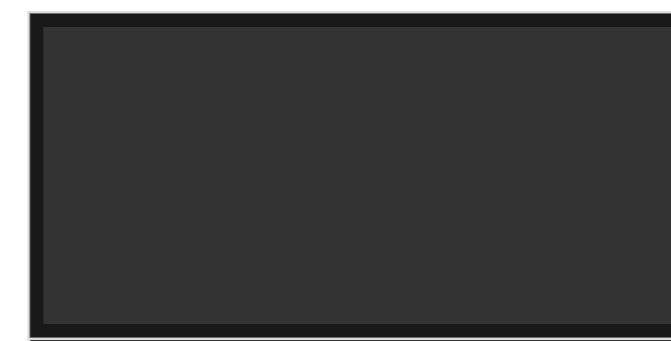
More about [Bill](#) [Deloitte](#) [Department of Human Services](#) [Facebook](#) [Manhattan](#) [Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) [MIT](#) [Technology](#) [Twitter](#)

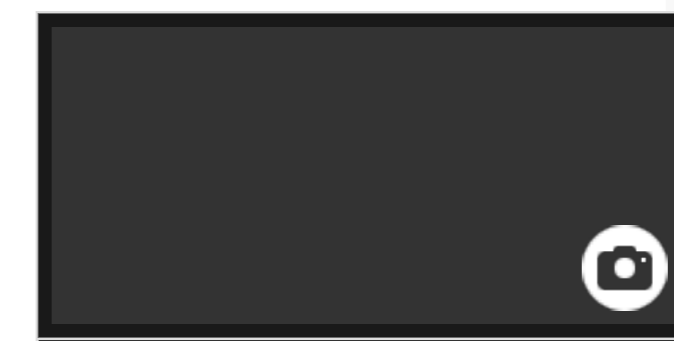
0 Comments

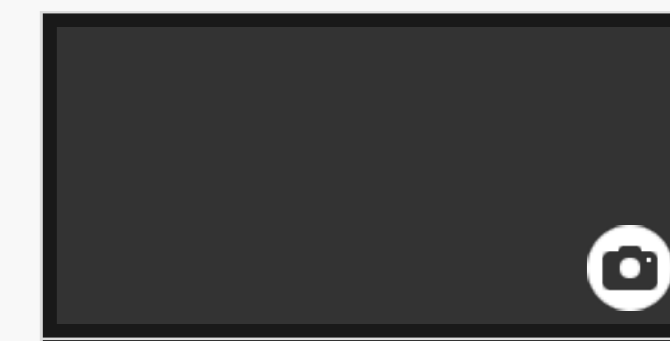
Read next

 [Blackmores ramps up digital efforts for greater insights, efficiencies](#)

 [CIO50 2019: #9 Dr Steve Hodgkinson, Victorian Department of Health and Human ...](#)

 [How to deal with the cultural and technological challenges of transformation](#)

 [In pictures: CMOs, CIOs and their role in customer experience](#)

 [CIO Summit Melbourne 2019](#)

G Suite vs. Office 365: What's the best office suite for business?

Choosing an office suite used to be a no-brainer, but Google's G Suite is now a powerful, feature-filled alternative to Microsoft Office. We break down the pros and cons of each suite to help you decide which is right for your business.