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See page 4

AUSTRALIA'S DAILY E-MAIL TECHNOLOGY NEWS SERVICE – AVAILABLE ONLY ON SUBSCRIPTION

\$30 BILLION SPENDING PLAN

Apple falls in with Trump: set to bring home \$250 billion

SAN FRANCISCO – In a major announcement that's likely to be applauded by the **Trump** administration, **Apple** yesterday said it plans to repatriate a massive US\$250 billion in profits that it has been holding in foreign countries, including Ireland – and possibly Australia.



This is expected to encourage other US companies that have been holding large profits overseas to bring at least some of their massive earnings back to the USA.

Apple, already the largest US taxpayer, anticipates paying a repatriation tax of about

\$38 billion, as required by recent changes to the US tax law, orchestrated by US President **Donald Trump**. A payment of that size would be the largest of its kind ever made, market watchers say.

In a further nod to the Trump America-first initiatives, Apple also said it plans to outlay more than US\$30 billion in capital expenditures in the USA over the next five years. This will include establishment of a major new campus in a new location, which will initially house technical support for customers.

Actual location of the new campus will be announced
Continued on page 2

Aussie start-ups garner \$700mil.

SYDNEY – A total of \$698 million was invested in Australian start-ups during 2017, up 1.4 percent over the previous year, new figures from **KPMG** reveal.

A **KPMG** quarterly report on venture capital investment, **Venture Pulse**, shows 17 deals were closed, representing a total investment of \$152.6 million in the fourth

quarter and more than the same period in 2016.

"Australia's start-up investment scene has rapidly matured, with professional VC firms raising and deploying increasing levels of capital over the past few years," said **Amanda Price**, **KPMG's** head of high growth ventures.

Among the highest investments Australian start-ups received were \$37 million invested in Melbourne-based digital trading platform **IR Exchange**; \$31.4 million in Sydney-based outsourcing company **Airtasker**; and \$24.5 million in Sydney-based super fund start-up **Spaceship**.

But the news isn't all good. While values invested increased, the number of investment deals declined from a total of 185 in 2016 down to just 135 in 2017.

China topped Asia-based venture capital investments in Australia in the fourth quarter of 2017 with deals amounting to \$17.5 billion.

Total investment in Asia was \$60.3 billion in 2017. Three \$1.26 billion-plus investments in China during the fourth quarter helped drive the yearly result.



Echo speakers reach Australia – and Alexa gets to talk Strine

SYDNEY – Beginning to flex its new Aussie muscles, **Amazon Australia** says its Echo suite of smart home speakers will soon be available in Australia – a move seen as intensifying competition within the smart-speaker market.



And – stone the crows! – Amazon has also revealed that its digital smart assistant **Alexa** will henceforth feature an Australian accent when sold to Aussie customers.

Pre-orders for Australian Echo speakers are now being taken on Amazon Australia's Web site, but the devices won't ship until early February.

Amazon's Echo smart speakers will also be available to purchase from retailers including **JB Hi-Fi**, **Telstra**, **Office-**

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works and Myer. The standard Echo will retail for \$149, Echo Dot for \$79 and Echo Plus with built-in smart hub for \$229. To celebrate the launch, Amazon has offered a \$30 discount off the RRP.

The Echo devices will arrive with a claimed 10,000 “skills”, including checking **Qantas** flights, obtaining surf reports, checking account balances from **Westpac** and **NAB**, and obtaining recipes from Australian cooking Web site **Taste**.

The **Amazon Music** service will also be available in Australia from February 1. Amazon claims it boasts a catalogue of more than 45 million songs, including some featuring acclaimed local talent”.

\$730 million fund set to drive defence quantum research

CANBERRA – The **Australian Government** is seeking applications for its **Next Generation Technologies Fund**, and is said to be looking for proposals from industry, academia, and government research agencies that will contribute to the potential development of so-called quantum technologies.

The \$730 million fund, announced in March last year, is expected to provide “creative solutions” to the **Australian Defence Force (ADF)**, while also benefiting the nation’s industries.

Said Defence Industry Minister **Christopher Pyne**, *pictured*: “As our enemies devise new ways to attack, our defence force must have advanced ways to respond and overcome new threats, This is a 10-year strategic research and development program that will deliver game-changing capabilities for the ADF of the future.”

He said the fund will draw on scientific expertise from both industry and university sectors in a bid to give the



ADF a “winning edge with advanced technologies”.

The Government says a Quantum Technologies Fund is aimed at realising “game-changing” capabilities, following recent developments in quantum science.

“Quantum Technologies seeks to leverage the vibrant quantum science, technology and innovation capability across Australia to develop technology solutions of relevance to Defence,” the call for applications reads.

Vocus scores PNG cable plan

CANBERRA – The **Department of Foreign Affairs** has signed a \$2.8 million deal with **Vocus** to conduct a scoping study for the design, construction and procurement of a submarine cable system linking the major islands of the Solomons and Papua-New Guinea with Australia via a 4000-plus kilometre fibreoptic cable.

Vocus has a track record in building such infrastructure with its own Australia-Singapore cable venture under way and said to be ready for service later this year.

The Solomon Islands currently has its telco needs served by satellite, while PNG uses a low-capacity cable that is nearing its end of life.

According to reports, the cable project was originally to be conducted by Chinese-based **Huawei** – but that deal was opposed by the **Turnbull Government**, concerned that such a development could establish a backdoor into Australia’s telecommunications network

Vocus says its study will take three months and will include consultation with the governments of the Solomon Islands and PNG.

Mobile Muster hunts old mobiles

SYDNEY – Don’t pitch your old and non-working mobile phone in the bin, or hide it at the bottom of a drawer: an outfit dubbed **MobileMuster** reckon s it has a much

Apple set to bring home \$250 billion *Continued from page 1*

later in the year, Apple said – and you can bet that a number of major US cities are already pushing their case..

Apple also said it plans to establish more than 20,000 new jobs in the USA through hiring at existing campuses as well as the new one, wherever that may be (you can safely bet it will be close to a major technology-bound university).

About \$10 billion of Apple’s planned new capital expenditure will involve investments in US datacentres, the company said.

Apple’s move follows a 2016 announcement by then president-elect Trump criticising Apple’s reliance on its Chinese supply chain, and telling the *New York Times* that he would “get Apple to build a big plant, or many big plants, in the United States.”

Also affecting yesterday’s announcement, Congress recently passed a new national tax bill, which requires companies to pay a one-time tax on foreign-held earnings, regardless of where the money is stashed.

Observers estimate that combining the new invest-

ments and Apple’s current spending programs with domestic suppliers and manufacturers – an estimated \$55 billion for 2018 – Apple’s direct contribution to the US economy will be more than a staggering \$350 billion over the next five years

That figure does not include Apple’s ongoing tax payments, the tax revenues generated from employees’ wages or the sale of Apple products.

Some \$10 billion of Apple’s expanded capital expenditures will involve investments in datacentres across the US. Over the last decade, Apple has so far invested billions of dollars in datacentres and co-located facilities in seven US states.

Apple has told employees that it’s rewarding them with \$2500 apiece in restricted shares as a result of the new US tax law. It wasn’t clear yesterday whether this will apply to overseas Apple workers – including those in Australia – or would be restricted to US employees.

Apple shares closed at \$179.10 on US markets, up 2.9 percent and close to the 52-week high of \$179.39.

better idea. It has teamed up with food rescue organisation **OzHarvest** to encourage Australians to recycle their old mobiles. For every phone recycled until the end of February, OzHarvest says it will deliver a meal to someone in need through the companies' Mobile for a Meal initiative.

The aim is to collect and recycle 70,000 phones – and deliver 70,000 meals to those in need across Australia.

MobileMuster pledges to recycle the mobiles, with hopefully 99 per cent of the materials going back into making new products.

It's said to be the only government-accredited mobile phone recycling program in Australia and is funded by mobile phone industry members including **Telstra**.

Old mobiles can be handed in at MobileMuster collection points at Telstra stores.



MS Australia seeks new CTO: non-Aussies need not apply

SYDNEY – **Microsoft Australia** is on the hunt for a new chief technology officer after incumbent **James Kavanagh** was moved to lead the rollout of Microsoft's new Azure regions in Canberra Data Centres Central 1 and 2.

The two new regions are said to complement Microsoft's existing cloud presence in Sydney and Melbourne, focusing on government customers and their suppliers at federal, state and local levels.

"As a result of James's move into this new role, we are now advertising for a national chief technology officer to support our customers as they transform their organisations to take advantage of cloud and digital services," a Microsoft spokesperson has said.

Non-Australian citizens will not be considered for the job, however. "Due to the nature of the role and a need to either have or be capable of achieving Australian security clearance, only Australian citizens can be considered," a job advertisement says.

Bitcoin tanks – then recovers

NEW YORK – **Bitcoin** has taken a tremendous pounding on the US market, yesterday plunging below US\$10,000 in value before staging a rally and finishing the day virtually unchanged.

The crypto-currency at one point dropped as low as \$9186 – down by more than \$2000, and prompting predictions that the bitcoin bubble might finally be about to burst.

However the currency rebounded \$1600 in the next four hours to end trade at US\$10,780 in New York

The drama had been sparked by increased scrutiny from regulators around the world, wiping out more than \$300 billion in value since January 13, according to a Bloomberg report.

This noted that Bitcoin's losses had reached \$140 billion. However the price was still higher by 1000 percent over

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the past year. "Bitcoin was overbought and sentiment was ecstatic," said **Ari Paul**, chief investment officer of **Block-Tower Capital Advisors**. "This is an overdue correction triggered by South Korean regulation fears."

Cross-your-heart wearables make biometrics even easier

LAS VEGAS – Wearables start-up **OMsignal**, which has made a name for itself with the development of a woman's bra and shirt that can monitor heart and breathing, unveiled a smaller module at the recent Consumer Electronics Show.

Promising a new clothing partnership in March with a major, albeit unnamed, brand, the company's "smart" compression bras and shirts are claimed to record data through a tiny black sensor wirelessly connected to OMsignal's mobile app.

The Canada-based company said it has scored US\$20 million in funding to drive research.

It is not just women's apparel in the sights of investors, however, with French start-up **Spartan** promoting silver fibre-and-cotton men's boxer briefs claimed to reduce radiation by 99 percent and so preserve normal sperm "motility" (defined as the ability to move spontaneously and actively).

The boxers cost US\$35-45.

The company also showed off a shielded bodysuit for babies, starting at \$39 – but it may be ignored by many parents who can simply keep their phones away from babies.

Oops: Ripple founder drops \$44bn

NEW YORK – The recent plunge in crypto-currency values has wiped billions from the paper fortune of at

